

A  
T O U R  
THROUGH  
SICILY AND MALTA.

IN A  
SERIES OF LETTERS  
TO  
WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq.  
OF SOMERLY IN SUFFOLK;

FROM  
P. BRYDONE, F. R. S.

VOL. II.

D U B L I N :

PRINTED FOR W. WILSON, NO. 6, IN DAME-  
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M,DCC,LXXIV.

T O U R

THROUGH

SICILY AND MALTA

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

TO

WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq.

OF SOMERLEY IN SURREY

FROM

R. DRYDEN, Esq.

VOL. II.

LONDON

PRINTED FOR W. WILSON, AT  
STREET, THE CORNER OF BARRINGTON

STREET, LONDON.



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T O U R  
T H R O U G H  
S I C I L Y   A N D   M A L T A.

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L E T T E R   X V I I I .

DEAR BECKFORD,

June 16th.

**W**HEN I have nothing else to do, I generally take up the pen. We are now on the top of a very high mountain, about half way betwixt Agrigentum and Palermo. Our sea expedition by Trapani has failed, and we are determined to put no more confidence in that element ; happy beyond measure to find ourselves without reach of it, though in the most wretched and miserable of all possible villages. We have travelled all night on mules, and arrived here about ten o'clock, overcome with sleep and fatigue. We have just had an excellent dish of tea, which never fails to cure me of both, and I am now as fresh as when we set out. It has not had the same effect on my companions ; they have thrown themselves down on a vile straw bed in the corner of the hovel, and, in spite of a parcel of starved chic-

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kens

kens that are fluttering about, and picking the straws all round them, they are already fast asleep.

I shall seize that time to recapitulate what has happened since my last.

The day after I wrote to you, we made some little excursions round Agrigentum. The country is delightful, producing corn, wine, and oil, in the greatest abundance; the fields are, at the same time, covered with a variety of the finest fruits, oranges, lemons, pomegranates, almonds, pistachio-nuts, &c. &c. These afforded us almost as agreeable an entertainment as the consideration of the ruins from whence they spring.

We dined with the bishop, according to agreement, and rose from table, convinced that the antient Agrigentini could not possibly understand the true luxury of eating better than their descendants, to whom they have transmitted a very competent portion both of their social virtues and vices; I beg their pardon for calling them vices, I wish I had a softer name for it; it looks like ingratitude for their hospitality, for which we owe them so much.

We were just thirty at table, but, upon my word, I do not think we had less than an hundred dishes of meat. These were dressed with the richest and most delicate sauces, and convinced us that the old Roman proverb, of "*Siculus coquus et Sicula mensa*," was not more applicable in their time than it is at present. Nothing was wanting that could be invented, to stimulate and to flatter the palate; and to create a false appetite as well as to satisfy it. Some of the very dishes, so much celebrated by the Roman epicures, made a part of the feast, particularly the morene, which is so often mentioned by their authors. It is a species of eel, found only in this part of the Mediterranean, and sent from hence to several of the courts of Europe; it is not so fat and luscious as other eels, so that you can eat a good deal more of it; its flesh is as white as snow, and is indeed a very great delicacy;

delicacy; but a modern refinement in luxury has, I think, still produced a much greater; by a particular kind of management, they make the livers of their fowls grow to a very large size, and at the same time acquire a high and rich flavour: It is indeed a most incomparable dish, but the means of procuring it is so cruel, that I will not even trust it with you. Perhaps, without any bad intention, you might mention it to some of your friends, they to others, till at last it might come into the hands of those that would be glad to try the experiment, and the whole race of poultry might ever have reason to curse me: Let it suffice to say, that it occasions a cruel and a lingering death to the poor animal; that, I know, is enough to make you wish never to taste of it, whatever effect it may have upon others.

The Sicilians eat of every thing, and attempted to make us do the same. The company was remarkably merry, and did by no means belie their antient character, for most of them were more than half-seas over, long before we rose from table; and I was somewhat apprehensive of a second edition of the tremes scene, as they were beginning to reel exceedingly. By the bye, I do not doubt but that phrase of Half-seas over, may have taken its origin from some such story. They begged us to make a bowl of punch; a liquor they had often heard of, but had never seen. The materials were immediately found, and we succeeded so well, that they preferred it to all the wines on the table, of which they had an amazing variety. We were obliged to replenish the bowl so often, that I really expected to see most of them under the table. They called it Pontio, and bawled out with vast vociferation in its praise, saying, that Pontio (alluding to Pontius Pilate) was a much better fellow than they had ever taken him for.—However, after dinner, one of them, a reverend canon, grew excessively sick, and while he was throwing up, he turned to me with a



rueful countenance, and shaking his head he groaned out, “ Ah, Signor Capitano, sapeva sempre che Pontio era un grande traditore.”—“ I always knew that Pontius was a great traitor.” Another of them, overhearing him, exclaimed,—“ Aspettatevi, Signor Canonico.”—“ Not so fast (said he) my good Canon.”—“ Niente al pregiudizio di Signor Pontio, vi prego.—Recordate, che Pontio v’ha fatto un canonico ; —et Pontio ha fatto sua eccellenza uno Vescovo—Non scordatevi mai de vostri amici.”

Now what do you think of these reverend fathers of the church? their merit, you will easily perceive, does not consist in fasting and prayer.—Their creed, they say, they have a good deal modernized, and is much simpler than that of Athanasius.—One of them told me, that if we would but stay with them for some little time, we should soon be convinced that they were the happiest fellows on earth. “ We have exploded (said he) from our system every thing that is dismal or melancholy, and are persuaded, that of all the roads in the universe, the road to heaven must certainly be the pleasanter and least gloomy :—If it is not so (added he) God have mercy upon us, for I am afraid we shall never get there.”—I told him, I could not flatter him ;—“ That if laughing was really a sin, as some people taught, they were certainly the greatest of all sinners.”—“ Well (said he) we shall at least endeavour to be happy here, and that, I am persuaded, is the best of all preparations for happiness hereafter.—Abstinence (continued he) from all innocent and lawful pleasures, we reckon one of the greatest sins, and guard against it with the utmost care ; and I am pretty sure, it is a sin that none of us here will ever be damned for.”—He concluded by repeating two lines, which he told me was their favourite maxim ; the meaning of which was exactly those of Mr. Pope,

“ For



“ For God is paid when man receives ;  
 “ To enjoy is to obey.”

This is not the first time I have met with this licentious spirit amongst the Roman Catholic clergy ; there is so much nonsense and mummary in their worship, that they are afraid lest strangers should believe they are serious, and perhaps too often fly to the other extreme.

We were, however, much pleased with the bishop ; he is greatly and deservedly respected, yet his presence did no wise diminish, but rather increased the jollity of the company. He entered into every joke, joined in the repartee, at which he is a great proficient, and entirely laid aside his episcopal dignity ; which, however, I am told, he knows very well how to assume when it is necessary. He placed us next to himself, and behaved indeed, in every respect, with the greatest ease and politeness. He is of one of the first families of the island, and brother to the prince of ——. I had his whole pedigree pat, but now I have lost it ; no matter : he is an honest pleasant little fellow, and that is of much more consequence. He is not yet forty ; and so high a promotion in so early a period of life, is reckoned very extraordinary, this being the richest bishoprick in the kingdom. He is a good scholar, and very deeply read both in antient and modern learning ; and his genius is in no degree inferior to his erudition. The similitude of character and circumstances struck me so strongly, that I could scarce help thinking I had got beside our worthy and respectable friend the b——p of D—y, which, I assure you, still added greatly to the pleasure I had in his company. I told the bishop of this, adding, that he was brother to l—d B——l. He seemed much pleased, and said, he had often heard of the family, both when lord B—— was ambassador in Spain, and his other brother commander

in the Mediterranean. We found in this company a number of Free Mafons, who were delighted beyond measure when they discovered that we were their brethren. They pressed us exceedingly to spend a few more days amongst them, and offered us letters to Palermo, and every other town we should think of visiting: but the heats are increasing so violently, that we are afraid of prolonging our expedition, lest we should be caught by the Sirocco winds, supposed to blow from the burning deserts of Africa, and sometimes attended with very dangerous consequences to those that travel over Sicily.—But I find I have omitted several circumstances of our dinner. I should have told you, that it was an annual feast, given by the nobility of Agrigentum to the bishop: it was served in an immense granary, half full of wheat, on the sea shore, chosen on purpose to avoid the heat. The whole was on plate; and what appeared singular to us, but I believe is a much better method than ours, great part of the fruit was served up along with the second course, the first dish of which that went round was strawberries. The Sicilians were a good deal surprised to see us eat them with cream and sugar, yet upon trial they did not at all dislike the composition. The desert consisted of a prodigious variety of fruits, and still a much greater of ices; these were so disguised in the shapes of peaches, figs, oranges, nuts, &c. that a person unaccustomed to ices might very easily have been taken in, as an honest sea officer was lately at the house of a certain minister of your acquaintance, not less distinguished for the elegance of his table, than the exact formality and subordination ever to be observed at it; every dish, as well as person, having his precedence exactly ascertained, and observing the most rigid etiquette, none daring to move till his turn. After the second course was removed, and the ices, in the shape of various fruits and sweetmeats, advanced by way of rear-guard, one of the servants

carried

carried the figure of a fine large peach to the captain, who, unacquainted with deceit of any kind, never doubted that it was a real one, and cutting it through the middle, in a moment had one large half of it in his mouth; at first he only looked grave, and blew up his cheeks to give it more room; but the violence of the cold soon getting the better of his patience, he began to mumble it about from side to side in his mouth, his eyes rushing out of water, till at last, able to hold no longer, he spit it out upon his plate, exclaiming with a horrid oath, "A painted snowball, by Heaven!" and wiping away his tears with his napkin, he turned in a rage to the Italian servant that had helped him, with a "D—n your macaroni eyes, you rascal, what did you mean by that?"—The fellow, who did not understand a word of it, could not forbear smiling, which still convinced the captain the more that it was a trick; and he was just going to throw the rest of the snowball in his face, but was prevented by one of the company; when recovering from his passion, and thinking the object unworthy of it, he only added, in a softer tone, "Very well, neighbour, I only wish I had you on board ship for half an hour, you should have a dozen before you could say Jack Robison, for all your painted cheeks."

I ask pardon for this digression, but as it is a good laughable story, I know you will excuse it. About six o'clock we took a cordial leave of our jolly friends at Agrigentum, and embarked on board our sparano at the new port. I should have told you, that this harbour has lately been formed at a very great expence; this city having always been one of the principal ports of the island, for the exportation of grain. The bishop and his company went into a large barge, and sailed round the harbour; we saluted them as we went out, they returned the compliment, and we took a second leave. The evening was fine, and we coasted along for a good many



miles; we passed several points and little promontories, that were exceedingly beautiful and picturesque; many of them were entirely covered with noble large aloes in full blow. In one place I counted upwards of two hundred of these fine majestic plants all in flower; a sight which I imagined was hardly to be met with in the world.—After sun-set—alas!—fain would I conceal what happened after sun-set;—but life, you know, is chequered with good and evil, and it would have been great presumption to receive so much of the one, without expecting a little dash of the other too.—Besides, a sea expedition is nothing without a storm; it is like beef without mustard, or pork without pease pudding, perfectly insipid. Our journal would never have been readable had it not been for this.—Well, I assure you we had it. It was not, indeed, so violent as the great one off Louisa-burgh, or perhaps even that described by Virgil, the reading of which is said to have made people sea sick; but it was rather too much for our little bark.—I was going to tell you, that after sun-set the sky began to overcast, and in a short time the whole atmosphere appeared very fiery and threatening. We attempted to get into some creek, but could find none. The wind grew loud, and we found it was in vain to proceed; but, as the night was dark and hazy, we were dubious about the possibility of reaching the port of Agrigentum. However, this was all we had for it, as there was none other within a great many miles of us. We accordingly tacked about, and plying both oars and sails, with great care not to come amongst the rocks and breakers, in about two hours we spied the light-house, by which we directed our course, and got safely into port betwixt one and two in the morning. We lay down on our matras, and slept very sound till ten o'clock, when finding the falsity of our hypothesis, that there could be no bad weather in the Mediterranean at this season, we unanimously determined



mined to have nothing more to do with sparonaros, and sent immediately to engage mules to carry us over the mountains to Palermo. The storm continued with the utmost violence the whole day, and made us often thank heaven that we had got safely back. It was not till five at night that we had mules, guides, and guards provided us, when we set off, pretty much in the same order, and in the same equipage, as we did about three weeks ago from Messina. Our guards did not fail to fill us with the most dreadful apprehensions of this road, shewing us every mile where such a one was robbed, such another was murdered, &c. and entertained us with these melancholy ditties the greatest part of the way. Indeed, if one half of their stories are true, it is certainly the most dangerous road in the world; but I looked upon most of them as fictions, invented only to increase their own consequence, and to procure a little more money. There is, indeed, some foundation for these stories; numbers of gallows are erected upon the road *in terrorem*, and every little baron has the power of life and death in his own domain. Our bishop's brother, whose name I have forgot, seized lately four and twenty of these desperate banditti, after a violent resistance, where several were killed on both sides; and notwithstanding that some of them were under the protection of the nobility, and in their service, they were all hanged. However, this has by no means rooted them out. Our guards in the suspicious places always went with their pieces cocked, and kept a very close look-out to either side of them; but we saw nothing to alarm us, except the most dreadful roads in the world, in many places worse than any thing I ever met with amongst the Alps.—After travelling about 20 miles, we arrived by two in the morning at the most wretched—I don't know what to call it—there was not any one thing to be had but a little straw for the mules. However, after a good deal of difficulty,

we

we at last got fire enough to boil our tea-kettle, and having brought bread from Agrigentum, we made an excellent meal. Our tea-table was a round stone in the field, and as the moon shone bright, we had no occasion for any other luminary. You may believe we stayed here as short time as possible; the house was too dreadfully nasty to enter it, and the stable was full of poor wretches lying sleeping on the bare ground. In short, I never saw in any country so miserable an inn, for so it is stiled. We mounted our cavalry with all expedition, and in a very short time got into the woods, where we were serenaded by the nightingale as we went along, who made us a full apology and atonement for the bad cheer we had met with. In a short time it was day, and then we had entertainment enough from the varied scenes of the most beautiful, wild, and romantic country in the world.—The fertility of many of the plains is truly astonishing, without enclosures, without manure, and almost without culture. It is with reason that this island was stiled “*Romani imperii horreum*,” the granary of the Roman empire. Were it cultivated, it would still be the great granary of Europe. Pliny says, that it commonly yielded a hundred after one; and Diodorus, who was a native of the island, and writ on the spot, assures us that it produced wheat and other grain spontaneously. Homer advances the same fact in the *Odyssey*:

The soil untill'd a ready harvest yields,  
 With wheat and barley wave the golden fields;  
 Spontaneous wines from weighty clusters pour,  
 And Jove descends in each prolific shower.

POPE.

Many of the mountains seem to be formed by subterraneous fire; several of them retain their conical figure, and their craters, but not so exact as those on  
 mount

mount *Ætna*, as they are probably still much older. I likewise observed many pieces of lava on the road, and in the beds of the torrents, and a good deal of the stone called tufa, which is certainly the production of a volcano; so that I have not the least doubt that a great part of this island, as well as the neighbouring ones of Lipari, &c. has been originally formed by subterraneous fire; we likewise passed some quarries of a kind of talc, and also of a coarse alabaster; of this they make a sort of stucco or plaister, resembling that of Paris; but what I much regretted, we missed seeing the famous salt of Agrigentum, found in the earth about four or five miles from that city. It has this remarkable property, different from all other salt, that in the fire it immediately melts, and in the water it cracks and splits, but never dissolves. It is celebrated by Pliny, Aristotle, and others of the antient as well as modern naturalists. Fazzello, whom I have brought along with me to read by the road, says, he has often experienced this: He adds, from the authority of these antient authors, that they formerly had mines of this salt, that was so pure and solid that the statuaries and sculptors preferred it to marble, and made various works of it.

The poor people of the village have found us out, and with looks full of misery have surrounded our door; I must give them something.—Poor creatures, they have loaded us with blessings, and have returned to their humble and miserable dwellings.—Accursed tyranny,—thou worst of all curses!—what despicable objects we become in thy hands!—It is really altogether inconceivable that any government, however execrable, should be capable of rendering poor and wretched a country that produces, almost spontaneously, every thing that even luxury can desire. But, alas! poverty and wretchedness have ever been the attendants of the Spanish yoke, both on this and on t'other side of the globe. I hope there will be a hell  
on



on purpose for these haughty and barbarous conquerors, and that the Sicilians and Mexicans will have the tormenting of them.—They make it their boast, that the sun never sets on their dominions, but forget that since they became such, they have left him nothing to see in his course but deserted fields, barren wildernesses, oppressed peasants, and lazy, lying, lecherous monks.—Such are the fruits of their boasted conquests.—They ought rather to be ashamed that ever the sun should see them at all.—Other nations will only say, that he never sets on their crimes.—The sight of these poor people has filled me with indignation. This village is surrounded by the finest country in the world, yet there was neither bread nor wine to be found in it, and the poor inhabitants appear more than half starved.

“ ‘Mongst Ceres’ richest gifts with want oppress’d,  
 “ And ’midst the flowing vineyard die of thirst.”

Sacred liberty! thy blessings alone are the blessings of the soul, and however small our portion, with thee it is ever sweet; but without thee, the richest gifts of nature are but so many curses.—Accursed be those that made them so!

“ Who first taught souls enslav’d, and realms undone,  
 “ Th’ enormous faith of thousands made for one.”

Now that I am in the humour of it, I could curse them till sun-set, could it be of any service to these poor creatures; but I am afraid I should only put myself in a passion to no end; I shall therefore think of concluding, as I do not recollect that I have much more to say to you; besides, I find myself exceeding sleepy; I sincerely wish it may not be the same case with you before you have read thus far; if it is, I hope this chapter of curses will rouse you a little. I

now



now give you leave to sleep your fill. We have ordered our mules to be ready by five o'clock, and shall again travel all night;—the heats are too great to allow of it by day. Adieu.—These two fellows are still as sound as pigs. In a few minutes I shall be so too, for the pen is almost dropping out of my hand. Farewel.

Ever yours,

P. B.

### L E T T E R   X I X .

Palermo, June 19.

**W**E are now arrived at the great capital of Sicily, which, in our opinion, in beauty and elegance is far superior to Naples. It is not, indeed, so large, but the regularity, the uniformity, and neatness of its streets and buildings, render it much more pleasing; it is full of people, who have mostly an air of affluence and gaiety.—And indeed we seem to have got into a new world.—But stop—not so fast.—I had forgot that you have still 50 miles to travel on a cursed stubborn mule, over rocks and precipices; for I can see no reason why we should bring you at once into all the sweets of Palermo, without bearing at least some little part in the fatigues of the journey. Come, we shall make them as short as possible.

We left you, I think, in a little village on the top of a high mountain.—We should indeed use you very ill, were we to leave you there any longer; for, I own, it is the very worst country quarter that ever fell to my lot. However, we got a good comfortable sleep in it, the only thing that it afforded us; and the fleas, and bugs, and chickens did all that lay in their power

power even to deprive us of that, but we defied them. Our two leaders came to awake us before five, apostrophizing their entry with a detail of the horrid robberies and murders that had been committed in the neighbourhood; all of them, you may be sure, exactly on the road that we were to go. Our whole squadron were drawn out, and we were ranged in order of battle by five o'clock, when we began our march, attended by the whole village, man, woman, and child.—We soon got down amongst the woods, and endeavoured to forget the objects of misery we had left behind us. The beauty and richness of the country increased in proportion as we advanced. The mountains, although of a great height (that we have left is near 4000 feet, the mercury standing at 26 inches 2 lines) are covered to the very summit with the richest pasture; the grass in the vallies is already burnt up, so that the flocks are all upon the mountains. The gradual separation of heat and cold is very visible in taking a view of them. The vallies look brown and scorched, and the foot of the mountains to a considerable height; it then begins to take a shade of green, which grows darker and darker, and covers the whole upper regions; however, on the summit, the grass and corn are by no means so luxuriant as near the middle. We were amazed at the astonishing richness of the crops, greatly superior to any thing I have ever seen either in England or Holland, where the happy soil is assisted by all the arts of cultivation; whilst here, the wretched husbandman can hardly afford to give it a furrow, and gathers in with a heavy heart even the most luxuriant crops. To what purpose are they given him? only to lie a dead weight upon his hand, often till they are entirely lost, exportation being prohibited to all such as cannot pay exorbitantly for it into the king's coffers.—What a contrast is there betwixt this and the little uncouth country of Switzerland!—to be sure, the dreadful

dreadful consequences of oppression can never be set in a more striking opposition to the blessings and charms of liberty. Switzerland, the very excrescence of Europe, where nature seems to have thrown out all her cold and stagnating humours, full of lakes, marshes, and woods, and surrounded by immense rocks, and everlasting mountains of ice, the barren, but sacred, ramparts of liberty: Switzerland enjoying every blessing, where every blessing seems to have been denied; whilst Sicily, covered by the most luxuriant hand of Nature, where Heaven seems to have showered down its richest blessings with the utmost prodigality, groans under the most abject poverty, and with a pale and wan visage starves in the midst of plenty.—It is liberty alone that works this standing miracle.—Under her plastic hands the mountains sink, the lakes are drained, and these rocks, these marshes, these woods, become so many sources of wealth and pleasure.—But what has temperance to do with wealth?

“ Here reigns Content,  
 “ And Nature’s child Simplicity ; long since  
 “ Exil’d from polish’d realms.”

“ Tis Industry supplies  
 “ The little Temperance wants, and rosy Health  
 “ Sits smiling at the board.”

You will begin to think I am in danger of turning poetical in these classic fields ;—I am sure I neither suspected any of the mountains we have passed to be Parnassus, nor did I believe any one of the nine foolish enough to inhabit them, except Melpomenè, perhaps, as she is so fond of tragical faces ; however, I shall now get you out of them as soon as possible, and bring you once more into the gay world. I assure you, I have often wished that you could have lent me your muse on this expedition, my letters would then have been



been more worth the reading ; but you must take the will for the deed.

After travelling till about midnight, we arrived at another miserable village, where we slept for some hours on straw, and continued our journey again by day-break. We had the pleasure of seeing the rising sun from the top of a pretty high mountain, and were delighted with the prospect of Strombolo, and all the Lipari islands, at a great distance from us. On our descent from this mountain, we found ourselves on the banks of the sea, and took that road, preferable to an inland one, although several miles nearer. We soon lighted from our mules, and plunged into the water, which has ever made one of our greatest pleasures in the expedition ; nobody that has not tried it can conceive the delight of this, after the fatigue of such a journey, and passing three days without undressing. Your friend Fullarton, though only seventeen, but whose mind and body now equally despise every fatigue, found himself strong as a lion, and fit to begin such another march. We boiled our tea-kettle under a fig-tree, and eat a breakfast that might have served a company of strolling players.

The approach to Palermo is very fine ; all the alleys are planted with fruit-trees, and fine large American aloes in full blow.—Near the city we passed a place of execution, where the quarters of a vast number of robbers were hung up upon hooks, like so many hams ; some of them appeared newly executed, and made a very unsightly figure. On our arrival, we learned that a priest and three others had been taken a few days ago, after an obstinate defence, in which several were killed on both sides ; the priest, rather than submit to his conquerors, plunged his hanger into his breast, and died on the spot ; the rest submitted, and were executed.



As there is but one inn at Palermo, we were obliged to agree to their own terms (five ducats a day). We are but indifferently lodged; however, it is the only inn we have yet seen in Sicily, and indeed may be said to be the only one in the island. It is kept by a noisy troublesome Frenchwoman, who I find will plague us; there is no keeping her out of our rooms, and she never comes in without telling us of such a prince and such a duke, that were so superlatively happy at being lodged in her house; and we can easily learn that they were all desperately in love with her; and indeed she seems to take it very much amiss, that we are not inclined to be of the same sentiments. I have already been obliged to tell her, that we are very retired sort of people, and do not like company; I find she does not esteem us the better for it; and this morning, (as I passed through the kitchen, without speaking to her) I overheard her exclaim, "Ah mon Dieu! comme ces Anglois sont sauvages." I believe we must take more notice of her, otherwise we shall certainly have our rent raised; but she is as fat as a pig, and as ugly as a devil, and lays on a quantity of paint on each of her swelled cheeks, that looks like a great plaister of red Morocco. Her picture is hanging in the room where I am just now writing, as well as that of her husband, who, by the bye, is a ninny: they are no less vile curiosities than the originals.—He is drawn with his snuff-box open in one hand, and a dish of coffee in the other; and at the same time, *fait l'aimable à Madame*. I took notice of this triple occupation, which seemed to imply something particular. She told me that the thought was hers; that her husband was exceedingly fond of snuff and of coffee, and wanted by this to shew that he was still more occupied with her than with either of them.—I could not help applauding the ingenuity of the conceit. Madame is painted with an immense bouquet in her

VOL. II. P breast,

breast, and an orange in her right hand, emblematic of her sweetness and purity ; and has the prettiest little smirk on her face you can possibly imagine. She told me that she insisted on the painter drawing her *avec le souris sur le visage* ; but as he had not *esprit* enough to make her laugh naturally, she was obliged to force one, “ *qui n’etoit pas tout a fait si jolie que le naturel, mais qui vaudroit toujours mieux que de paroitre sombre.*”—I agreed with her perfectly, and assured her it became her very much,—“ *parceque les dames grasses sont toujours de bonne humeur.*”—I found, however, that she would willingly have excused me the latter part of the compliment, which more than lost all that I had gained by the former.—“ *Il est vrai* (said she, a good deal piqued) “ *je suis un peu en bon point, mais pas tant grasse pourtant.*”—I pretended to excuse myself, from not understanding all the finessè of the language ; and assured her, that *en bon point* was the very phrase I meant to make use of. She accepted the apology, and we are again reconciled ; for, to give the devil his due, they are good-humoured. She made me a curtsy, and repeated, “ *Oui, Monsieur pour parler comme il faut, il faut dire en bon point.—On ne dit pas grasse.*” I assured her, bowing to the ground, that the word should for ever be razed from my vocabulary. She left me with a gracious smile, and a curtsy much lower than the first ; adding, “ *Je sçavois bien que Monsieur etoit un homme comme il faut ;*”—at the same time tripping off on her tiptoes, as light as a feather, to shew me how much I had been mistaken. This woman made me recollect (what I have always observed) how little the manners of the French are to be changed by their connection with other nations ; allowing none to be in any degree worthy of imitation but their own.—Although she has now been here these twenty years, she is still as perfectly French, as if she had never been without the gates of Paris ; and looks  
upon

upon every woman in Palermo with the utmost contempt, because they have never seen that capital, nor heard the sublime musick of its divine opera. She is likewise (allowing for the difference of rank) an admirable epitome of all French women, whose universal passion has ever been the desire of admiration, and of appearing young, and ever would be, I really believe, were they to live to the age of a thousand. Any person that will take a look of the withered death's heads in their publick places, covered over with a thick mask of paint, will soon be convinced of this.—Now, our old ladies, when they get to the wrong side of sixty, generally take a jump up to the borders of fourscore, and appear no less vain of their years, than ever they were of their youth. I know many of them, that I am sure are not less happy, nor less contented, nor (I might almost add) less admired with their wrinkles, than ever they were with their dimples. I do not know whether a cheerful old woman, who is contented to appear so, is more respectable, or more estimable; or a withered witch, who fills up every wrinkle with varnish, and at fourscore attempts to give herself the bloom of four-and-twenty, is ridiculous and contemptible:—but as dinner is on the table, I shall leave you to determine it. Adieu.

P. B.

## LETTER XX

Palermo, June 23d.

**I** SHALL have a great deal to write you about this city; we are every day more delighted with it, and shall leave it with much regret. We have delivered our letters, in consequence of which we are loaded with civilities, and have got into a very agreeable set of acquaintance.—But I shall first attempt to

P 2

give



give you some little idea of the town, and then speak of its inhabitants. It is by much the most regular I have ever seen, and is built upon that plan, which I think all large cities ought to follow. The two great streets intersect each other exactly in the centre of the city, where they form a beautiful and a regular square, called the Ottangolo, adorned with very handsome, uniform buildings. From the centre of this square, you see the whole of these noble streets, and the four great gates of the city which terminate them; the symmetry and beauty of which produce a charming effect. The whole of these are to be magnificently illuminated some time next month, and must certainly be the finest sight in the world.—The four gates are each at the distance of about half a mile, (the diameter of the city being no more than a mile :) these are elegant pieces of architecture richly adorned; particularly the *Porta Nova* and *Porta Felice*, that terminate the street called the *Corso*, that runs south-west and north-east. The lesser streets in general run parallel to these great ones; so that from every part of the city, in a few minutes walking, you are always sure to arrive at one of the capital streets. The *Porta Felice* (by much the handsomest of the gates) opens to the *Marino*, a delightful walk, which constitutes one of the great pleasures of the nobility of Palermo. It is bounded on one side by the wall of the city, and on the other by the sea, from whence, even at this scorching season, there is always an agreeable breeze. In the centre of the *Marino* they have lately erected a very elegant kind of temple, which, during the summer months, is made use of as an orchestra for musick; and as in this season they are obliged to convert the night into day, the concert does not begin till the clock strikes midnight, which is the signal for the symphony to strike up: at that  
time

time the walk is crowded with carriages and people on foot; and the better to favour pleasure and intrigue, there is an express order, that no person, of whatever quality, shall presume to carry a light with him. The flambeaux are all extinguished at the Porte Felice, where the servants wait for the return of the carriages, and the whole company generally continue an hour or two together in utter darkness, except when the intruding moon, with her horns and her chastity, comes to disturb them. The concert finishes about two in the morning, when, for the most part, every husband goes home to his own wife. This is an admirable institution, and never produces any scandal: no husband is such a brute as to deny his wife the Marino; and the ladies are so cautious and circumspect on their side, that the more to avoid giving offence, they very often put on masques.

Their other amusements consist chiefly in their *Conversazioni*, of which they have commonly a great variety every night. There is one general one, supported by the subscription of all the nobility: this is open every evening at sun-set, and continues till midnight, when the Marino begins. It better deserves the name of a conversation than any I have seen in Italy; for here the people really come to converse, whereas in Italy, they only go to play at cards and eat ices. I have observed, that seldom or never one half of the company is engaged in play, nor do these either play long or deep. There are a number of apartments belonging to this conversation, all lighted up with wax-candles, and kept exceedingly cool and agreeable, and it is really altogether one of the most sensible and comfortable institutions I have ever seen: besides this, there are generally a number of particular conversations every night, and what will a good deal surprize you, these

are always held in the apartments of the lying-in ladies; for in this happy climate child-bearing is divested of all its terrors, and is only considered as a party of pleasure. This circumstance we were ignorant of till t'other morning. The Duke of Verdura, who does us the honours of the place, with great attention and politeness, came to tell us, we had a visit to make, that was absolutely indispensable. "The Princess Partano (said he) was brought to bed last night; and it is absolutely incumbent on you to pay your respects to her this evening."—I at first thought he was in joke; but he assured me he was serious, and that it would be looked upon as a great unpoliteness to neglect it.—Accordingly we went about sun-set, and found the princess sitting up in her bed, in an elegant undress, with a great number of her friends around her. She talked as usual, and seemed to be perfectly well. This conversation is repeated every night during her convalescence, which generally lasts for about eleven or twelve days. The custom is perfectly universal, and as the ladies here are very prolific, there is for the most part three or four of these assemblies going on in the city at the same time; possibly the Marino does not a little contribute towards them.

The Sicilian ladies marry at thirteen or fourteen, and are often grandmothers before they are thirty.—The Count Statela presented us a few days ago to his cousin, the Princess Partana, who he told us had a great number of children, the eldest of which was a very fine girl of fifteen. We talked to the princess for half an hour, not in the least doubting all the time that she was the daughter, till at last the young lady came in; and even then, it was not easy to say which appeared the handsomest or the youngest. This lady has had twelve children, and is still in all her bloom; she assured me that she never enjoyed more perfect health than when she was in child-bed;—that during the time of her pregnancy she was of-

ten



ten indisposed, but that immediately on delivery she was cured of all her complaints, and was capable of enjoying the company of her friends even more than at any other time. I expressed my astonishment at this very singular happiness of their climate or constitutions; but she appeared still more astonished when I told her that we lost many of our finest women in childbed, and that even the most fortunate and easy deliveries were attended with violent pain and anguish. She lamented the fate of our ladies, and thanked Heaven that she was born a Sicilian.

What this singularity is owing to, let the learned determine; but it is surely one of the capital blessings of these climates, where the curse that was laid upon mother Eve seems to be entirely taken off: I don't know how the ladies here have deserved this exemption, as they have at least as much both of Eve and the serpent as ours have, and still retain their appetite, as strong as ever, for forbidden fruit.—It seems hard, that in our own country, and in Switzerland, where probably the women in general are the chafest in Europe, this curse should fall the heaviest: it is most probably owing to the climate:—In cold, but more particularly in mountainous countries, births are difficult and dangerous; in warm and low places they are more easy; the air of the first hardens and contracts the fibres, that of the second softens and relaxes them. In some places in Switzerland, and amongst the Alps, they lose almost one half their women in childbed, and those that can afford it, often go down to the low countries some weeks before they lie in, and find their deliveries much easier. One may easily conceive what a change it must make upon the whole frame, to add the pressure of a column of air of two or three thousand feet more than it is accustomed to: and if muscular motion is performed by the pressure of the atmosphere, as some have alleged, how much must this add to the action of eve-

ry muscle!—However, if this hypothesis were true, our strength should have been diminished one third on the top of Etna, which did not appear to be the case; as we had passed through one third of the quantity of air of the whole atmosphere. I have often thought that physicians pay too little attention to these considerations; and that in skilful hands they might be turned to great account, in the cure of many diseases: they only send their patients to such a degree of latitude, but never think of the degree of altitude in the atmosphere. Thus, people with the same complaints are sent to Aix and to Marseilles, although the air in these two places must be essentially different. Marseilles is on the level of the sea, and Aix (as I myself measured it) is very near 600 feet above it.—Now I am persuaded, that in such a country as Switzerland, or on such a mountain as Etna, where it is easy at all times to take off a pressure from the human body of many thousand pounds weight, that an ingenious physician might make great discoveries; nor indeed would these discoveries be confined to the changing of the quantity of air that presses on the body, but would likewise be extended to the changing of the quality of the air we breathe; which, on the side of Etna, or any very high mountain, is more varied than in travelling through fifty degrees of latitude. I beg pardon for this digression; the only amends I can make, is to put it out of my power to trouble you with any more, and thus abruptly assure you how much, &c. &c.

P. B.

L E T-

## LETTER XXI.

Palermo, June 26th.

OUR fondness for Palermo increases every day, and we are beginning to look forward with regret to the time of our leaving it, which is now fast approaching. We have made acquaintance with many sensible and agreeable people. The Sicilians appear frank and sincere ; and their politeness does not consist in shew and grimace, like some of the polite nations of the continent. The viceroy sets the pattern of hospitality, and he is followed by the rest of the nobles. He is an amiable agreeable man, and I believe is as much beloved and esteemed as a viceroy to an absolute monarch can be. He was in England in his youth, and is still very fond of many of our authors, with whom he seems to be intimately acquainted ; he speaks the language tolerably well, and encourages the learning of it amongst his subjects.—He may be considered with regard to Naples, as what the lord lieutenant of Ireland is with regard to England, with this trifling difference, that, like his master, he is invested with absolute authority ; and keeps his parliament (for he has one too) in the most perfect subjection. The patriots here, although a very numerous body, have never been able to gain one point, no nor a place, or even a pension for a needy friend. Had lord Townshend the power of the marquis Fogliano, I suppose your Hibernian squabbles (of which we hear so much, even at this distant corner) would soon have an end.—Notwithstanding this vast authority, he is extremely affable and familiar, and makes his house agreeable to every body. We go very often to his assemblies, and have dined with him several times ; his table is served with elegance and magnificence, much  
superior



superior indeed to that of his Sicilian Majesty, who eats off a service of plate, at least 300 years old, very black and rusty indeed : I heard a gentleman ask one day, whilst we were standing round the table, if it had not been dug out of Herculaneum. That of the viceroy is extremely elegant, and indeed the whole of his entertainments correspond with it ; though we have as yet seen nothing here at all to be compared to the luxury of our feast in the granary at Agrigentum.—The Sicilian cookery is a mixture of the French and Spanish ; and the Olio still preserves its rank and dignity in the centre of the table, surrounded by a numerous train of fricassees, fricandeaus, ragouts, and pet de loups ; like a grave Spanish Don, amidst a number of little smart marquises—The other nobility, whom we have had occasion to see, are likewise very magnificent in their entertainments ; but most particularly in their deserts and ices, of which there is a much greater variety than I have ever seen in any other country. They are exceeding temperate with regard to wine ; though, since we have taught them our method of toasting ladies they are fond of, and of hob and nobing with their friends, ringing the two glasses together, this social practice has animated them so much, that they have been led to drink a much greater quantity than they are accustomed to ; and they often reproach us with having made them drunkards. In their ordinary living they are very frugal and temperate, and from the sobriety we have seen here, we are now more persuaded that the elevated situation of Agrigentum, must be one great cause of its drunkenness.

The Sicilians have always had the character of being very amorous, and surely not without reason.—The whole nation are poets, even the peasants ; and a man stands a poor chance for a mistress, that is not capable of celebrating her praises. I believe it is generally

rally allowed that the pastoral poetry had its origin in this island; and Theocritus, after whom they still copy, will ever be looked upon as the prince of pastoral poets.—And indeed in musick too, as well as poetry, the soft amorous pieces are generally stiled *Siciliani*; these they used to play all night below their mistresses windows, to express the delicacy of their passion; but serenading is not now so much in fashion, as it was during the time of their more intimate connection with Spain, when it was said by one of their authors, that no person could pass for a man of gallantry that had not got a cold; and was sure never to succeed in making love, unless he made it in a hoarse voice. The ladies now are not so rigid, and will sometimes deign to hear a man, even although he speaks in a clear accent.—Neither do they any longer require the prodigious martial feats, that were then necessary to win them.—The attacking of a mad bull, or a wild boar, was reckoned the handsomest compliment that a lover could pay to his mistress; and the putting these animals to death, softened her heart much more than all the sighing love-sick tales that could be invented. This has been humnourously ridiculed by one of their poets. He says that Cupid's little golden dart was now changed into a massy spear, which answered a double purpose; for at the same time that it pierced the tough bull's hide, it likewise pierced the tender lady's heart.—But these Gothick customs are now confined to Spain, and the gentle Sicilians have reassumed their softness. To tell you the truth, gallantry is pretty much upon the same footing here as in Italy, the establishment of Ciccisbees is pretty general, though not quite so universal as on the continent. However, a breach of the marriage vow is no longer looked upon as one of the deadly sins; and the confessors fall upon easy and pleasant enough methods of making them atone for it. The husbands are content, and, like able generals, make  
up

up for the loss of one fortress, by the taking of another. However, female licentiousness has by no means come to such a height as in Italy. We have seen a great deal of domestic happiness; husbands and wives that truly love one another, and whose mutual care and pleasure is the education of their children. I could name a number;—The Duke of Verdura, the Prince of Partana, the Count Buscemi, and many others who live in the most sacred union. These sights are very rare on the continent. But indeed the stile that young people are brought up in here, seems to lay a much more solid foundation for matrimonial happiness, than either in France or Italy. The young ladies are not shut up in convents till the day of their marriage; but for the most part live in the house with their parents, where they receive their education, and are every day in company with their friends and relations. From what I can observe, I think they are allowed almost as much liberty as with us. In their great assemblies, we often see a club of young people (of both sexes) get together in a corner, and amuse themselves for hours, at cross purposes or such like games, without the mothers being under the least anxiety; indeed, we sometimes join in these little parties, and find them extremely entertaining. In general, they are very quick and lively, and have a number of these *jeux d'esprit*, which I think must ever be a proof, in all countries, of the familiar intercourse betwixt the young people of the two sexes; for all these games are insipid, if they are not seasoned by something of that invisible, and subtile agency, which renders every thing more interesting in these mixed societies, than in the lifeless ones, composed of only one part of our species. Thus, in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, I have never seen any of these games; in France seldom; but in Switzerland, (where the greatest liberty and familiarity is enjoyed



joyed amongst the young people) they are numberless. —But the conversation hour is arrived, and our carriage is waiting.

Adieu, &c.

## LETTER XXII.

Palermo, June 28th.

**T**HERE are two small countries, one to the east, the other to the west of this city, where the principal nobility have their country palaces. Both these we have visited; there are many noble houses in each of them. That to the east is called La Bagaria, that to the west Il Colle.—We are this instant returned from La Bagaria, and I hasten to give you an account of the ridiculous things we have seen, though perhaps you will not thank me for it.

The palace of the Prince of Valguarnera is, I think, by much the finest and most beautiful of all the houses of the Bagaria; but it is far from being the most extraordinary: were I to describe it, I should only tell you of things you have often seen and heard of in other countries, so I shall only speak of one, the like of which certainly never did exist on the face of the earth; it belongs to the prince of Palagonia, a man of immense fortune, who has devoted his whole life to the study of monsters and chimeras, greater and more ridiculous infinitely than ever entered into the imagination of the wildest writers of romance or knight-errantry.

The amazing crowd of statues that surround his house, appear at a distance like a little army drawn up for its defence; but when you get amongst them, and every one assumes his true likeness, you imagine you have got into the regions of delusion and enchantment; for of all that immense group, there is not one made to represent any one object in nature; nor is  
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the absurdity of the wretched imagination that created them less astonishing than its wonderful fertility. It would require a volume to describe the whole, and a sad volume indeed it would make. He has put the heads of men to the bodies of every sort of animal, and the heads of every other animal to the bodies of men. Sometimes he makes a compound of five or six animals that have no sort of resemblance in nature. He puts the head of a lion to the neck of a goose, the body of a lizard to the legs of a goat, the tail of a fox. On the back of this monster, he puts another, if possible still more hideous, with five or six heads, and a bush of horns, that beats the beast in the Revelations all to nothing. There is no kind of horn in the world that he has not collected; and his pleasure is, to see them all flourishing upon the same head. The scandalous chronicle says, that his wife has assisted him in making this collection, and that there are some of her placing as well as of his. However this may be, she is at present within a few weeks of her time, and we have been told by several people of Palermo, that his sincere wish is, that she may bring forth a monster. This is a strange species of madness; and it is truly unaccountable that he has not been shut up many years ago; but he is perfectly innocent, and troubles nobody by the indulgence of his frenzy; on the contrary he gives bread to a vast number of statuaries and other workmen whom he rewards in proportion as they can bring their imaginations to coincide with his own; or, in other words, according to the hideousness of the monsters they produce. It would be idle and tiresome to be particular in an account of these absurdities. The statues that adorn (or rather deform) the great avenue, and surround the court of the palace, amount already to 600, notwithstanding which, it may be truly said, that he has not broke the second commandment; for of all that number, there is not  
the

the likeness of any thing in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. The old ornaments which were put up by his father, who was a sensible man, appear to have been in a very good taste. They have all been knock'd to pieces, and laid together, in a heap, to make room for this new creation.

The inside of this enchanted castle corresponds exactly with the out; it is in every respect as whimsical and fantastical, and you cannot turn yourself to any side, where you are not stared in the face by some hideous figure or other. Some of the apartments are exceedingly spacious and magnificent, with vast arch'd roofs; which instead of plaister or stucco, are composed entirely of large mirrors, nicely joined together. The effect that these produce, (as each of them make a small angle with the other,) is exactly that of a multiplying glass, so that when three or four people are walking below, there is always the appearance of three or four hundred walking above. The whole of the doors are likewise covered over with small pieces of mirror, cut into the most ridiculous shapes, and intermix'd with a vast variety of chrystal and glass of different colours. All the chimney-pieces, windows, and side-boards are crouded with pyramids and pillars of tea-pots, caudle-cups, bowls, cups, saucers, &c. strongly cemented together; some of these columns are not without their beauty: one of them has a large China chamber-pot for its base, and a circle of pretty little flower-pots for its capital: the shaft of the column is upwards of four feet long, composed entirely of tea-pots of different sizes, diminishing gradually from the base to the capital. The profusion of china that has been employed in forming these columns, is altogether incredible; I dare say there is not less than forty pillars and pyramids formed in this strange fantastic manner.

Most



Most of the rooms are paved with exceeding fine marble tables of different colours, that look like so many tomb stones. Some of these are richly wrought with lapis lazuli, porphyry, and other valuable stones; their fine polish is now entirely gone, and they only appear like common marble; in place of these beautiful tables he has made a new set of his own invention, some of which are not without their merit. These are composed of the finest tortoise-shell mixed with mother of pearl, ivory, and a variety of metals, and are mounted on very fine stands of solid brass.

The windows of this enchanted castle are composed of a variety of glass of every different colour, mixed without any sort of order or regularity. Blue, red, green, yellow, purple, violet.—So that at each window, you may have the heavens and earth of whatever colour you chuse, only by looking through that pane that pleases you.

The house clock is cased in the body of a statue; the eyes of the figure move with the pendulum, turning up their white and black alternately, and make a hideous appearance.

His bed-chamber and dressing-room are like two apartments in Noah's ark; there is scarce a beast, however vile, that he has not placed there; toads, frogs, serpents, lizards, scorpions, all cut out in marble, of their respective colours. There are a good many busts too, that are not less singularly imagined.—Some of these make a very handsome profile on one side; turn to the other, and you have a skeleton; here you see a nurse with a child in her arms, its back is exactly that of an infant; its face is that of a wrinkled old woman of ninety.

For some minutes one can laugh at these follies; but indignation and contempt soon get the better of your mirth, and the laugh is turned into a sneer. I own I was soon tired of them; though some things

things are so strangely fancied, that it may well excuse a little laughing, even from the most rigid cynic.

The family statues are charming; they have been done from some old pictures, and make a most venerable appearance; he has dressed them out from head to foot in new and elegant suits of marble; and indeed the effect it produces is more ridiculous than any thing you can possibly conceive. Their shoes are all of black marble, their stockings generally of red; their clothes are of different colours, blue, green, and variegated, with a rich lace of *giall' antique*. The perukes of the men, and head-dresses of the ladies are of fine white, so are their shirts, with long flowing ruffles of alabaster. The walls of the house are covered with some very fine basso relievos of white marble, in a good taste; these he could not well take out or alter, so he has only added immense frames to them. Each frame is composed of four large marble tables.

The author and owner of this singular collection is a poor miserable lean figure, shivering at a breeze, and seems to be afraid of every body he speaks to; but (what surprised me a good deal) I have heard him talk speciously enough on several occasions. He is one of the richest subjects in the island, and it is thought he has not laid out less than 20,000 pounds in the creation of this world of monsters and chimeras.—He certainly might have fallen upon some way to prove himself a fool at a much cheaper rate. However it gives bread to a number of poor people, to whom he is an excellent master.

His house at Palermo is a good deal in the same stile: his carriages are covered over with great plates of brass, so that I really believe some of them are musket proof.

The government have had serious thoughts of demolishing the regiment of monsters he has placed round his house; but as he is humane and inoffensive, and as this would certainly break his heart, they have

as yet forborne. However, the seeing of them by women with child is said to have been already attended with very unfortunate circumstances; several living monsters having been brought forth in the neighbourhood. The ladies complain that they dare no longer take an airing in the Bagaria; that some hideous form always haunts their imagination for some time after: their husbands too, it is said, are as little satisfied with the great variety of horns. Adieu. I shall write to you again by next post, as matter multiplies fast upon me in this metropolis.

Ever yours.

### L E T T E R XXIII.

Palermo, June 30th.

**T**HE account the people here give of the Sirocco, or South-east wind, is truly astonishing; we were complaining to-day, at the viceroy's, of the violence of the heat, the thermometer being at 79.—They assured us, that if we staid till the end of next month, we should probably look on this as pleasant cool weather; adding, that if we had once experienced the Sirocco, all other weather will appear temperate.—I asked to what degree the thermometer commonly rose during this wind; but found to my astonishment, that there was no such instrument in use amongst them: however, the violence of it, they assure us, is altogether incredible; and that those who had remained many years in Spain and Malta, had never felt any heat in these countries to compare to it.—How it happens to be more violent in Palermo than any other part of Sicily, is a mystery that still remains to be unfolded. Several treatises have been writ on this singular subject, but none that give any tolerable degree of satisfaction. As we shall stay for some time longer,



er, it is possible we may have an opportunity of giving you some account of it.

They have begun some weeks ago to make preparations for the great feast of St. Rosalia ;—and our friends here say they are determined that we shall not leave them till after it is over ; but this I am afraid will not be in our power. The warm season advances, and the time we appointed for our return to Naples is already elapsed, but indeed, return when we will, we shall make a very bad exchange ;—and were it not for those of our own country whom we have left behind us, we certainly should have determined on a much longer stay.—But although the society here is greatly superior to that of Naples, yet,—call it prejudice—or call it what you will, there is a—*je ne sçai quoi*,—a certain confidence in the character, the worth, and friendship of our own people, that I have seldom felt any where on the continent, except in Switzerland.—This sensation, which constitutes the charm of society, and can alone render it supportable for any time, is only inspired by something analogous and sympathetic in our feelings and sentiments ; like two instruments that are in unison, and vibrate to each others touch : for society is a concert, and if the instruments are not in tune, there never can be harmony ; and (to carry on the metaphor) this harmony too must sometimes be heightened and supported by the introduction of a discord ; but where discords predominate, which is often the case betwixt an English and an Italian mind, the musick must be wretched indeed.—Had we but a little mixture of our own society, how gladly should we spend the winter in Sicily ; but we often think with regret on Mr. Hamilton's and Mr. Walter's families, and wish again to be on the continent.—Indeed, even the pleasures we enjoy here, we owe principally to Mr. Hamilton : his recommendations we have ever found to be the best passport and introduction ; and the zeal and cordiality with which

these are always received proceeds evidently not from motives of deference and respect to the minister, but of love and affection to the man.

This morning we went to see a celebrated convent of Capuchins, about a mile without the city; it contains nothing very remarkable but the burial place, which indeed is a great curiosity. This is a vast subterraneous apartment, divided into large commodious galleries, the walls on each side of which are hollowed into a variety of niches, as if intended for a very great collection of statues; these niches, instead of statues, are all filled with dead bodies, set upright upon their feet, and fixed by the back to the inside of the nich: their number is about three hundred: they are all dressed in the clothes they usually wore, and form a most respectable and venerable assembly. The skin and muscles, by a certain preparation, become as dry and hard as a piece of stock-fish; and although many of them have been here upwards of two hundred and fifty years, yet none are in any degree reduced to skeletons; the muscles, indeed, in some appear to be a good deal more shrunk than in others; probably because these persons had been more extenuate at the time of their death.

Here the people of Palermo pay daily visits to their deceased friends, and recal with pleasure and regret the scenes of their past life: here they familiarize themselves to their future state, and chuse the company they would wish to keep in the other world. It is a common thing to make choice of their nich, and to try if their body fits it, that no alterations may be necessary after they are dead; and sometimes, by way of a voluntary penance, they accustom themselves to stand for hours in these niches.

The bodies of the princes and first nobility are lodged in very handsome chests or trunks, some of them richly adorned: these are not in the shape of coffins, but all of one width, and about a foot and a half,

half, or two feet deep. The keys are kept by the nearest relations of the family, who sometimes come and drop a tear over their departed friends.

I am not sure if this is not a better method of disposing of the dead than ours. These visits must prove admirable lessons of humility; and I assure you, they are not such objects of horror as you would imagine: they are said, even for ages after death, to retain a strong likeness to what they were when alive; so that, as soon as you have conquered the first feelings excited by these venerable figures, you only consider this as a vast gallery of original portraits, drawn after the life, by the justest and most unprejudiced hand. It must be owned that the colours are rather faded; and the pencil does not appear to have been the most flattering in the world; but no matter, it is the pencil of truth, and not of a mercenary, who only wants to please. We were alledging too, that it might be made of a very considerable utility to society; and that these dumb orators could give the most pathetic lectures imaginable upon pride and vanity. Whenever a fellow began to strut, like Mr. B. or to affect the haughty supercilious air, he should immediately be sent to converse with his friends in the gallery; and if their arguments did not bring him to a proper way of thinking, I would give him up as altogether incorrigible.

At Bologna they shewed us the skeleton of a celebrated beauty, who died at a period of life when she was still the object of universal admiration. By way of making atonement for her own vanity, she bequeathed herself as a monument, to curb the vanity of others. Recollecting on her death-bed the great adulation that had been paid to her charms, and the fatal change they were soon to undergo, she ordered that her body should be dissected, and her bones hung up for the inspection of all young maidens who are inclined to be vain of their beauty. However, if she had been preserved in this moral gallery, the lesson



would still have been a stronger one; for those very features that had raised her vanity would still have remained, only divested of all their power, and disarmed of every charm.

Some of the Capuchins sleep in these galleries every night, and pretend to have many wonderful visions and revelations; but the truth is, that very few people believe them.

No woman is ever admitted into this convent either dead or alive; and this interdiction is writ in large characters over the gate. The poor indolent Capuchins, the frailest of all flesh, have great need of these precautions: they have no occupation from without, and they have no resources within themselves; so that they must be an easy prey to every temptation:—Boccaccio, and all the books of that kind, are filled with stories of their frailty.—Yesterday, dining at the Prince of Sperlinga's, and talking on this subject, the Abbé Tatti gave us an anecdote of a friend of his, who was formerly a brother of this convent. He is known by the the name of Fra Pasqual, and has passed through many singular scenes of life, which it would be too long to recount. His last migration, or, if you will, transmigration, was from one of the banditti of this kingdom, in which capacity he had been enrolled for some time; but, tired of the danger and fatigue to which he was perpetually exposed, he at last determined to exchange the character of the hero, for that of the saint, and try if it was not both safer and surer, to rely on the weakness of others, than on our own strength.

Fra Pasqual pretended a violent compunction for the transgressions of his past life, and made a promise to the Virgin, that all the remainder of it should be spent in mortification and penance, to atone for them. To this end Pasqual took the vows of poverty and of chastity, and entered into all the rigours of the monastic life.—For some weeks he behaved in a most  
exemplary

exemplary manner ; he went barefooted, wore a large rosary, and a thicker cord of discipline than any monk in the convent ; and his whole deportment gave testimony of the most unfeigned repentance ; however, the devil was still at work in the heart of Pasqual, and all these external mortifications only made him work the harder ; in short, he found it impossible to drive him out : Pasqual was sensible of this ; and afraid lest the enemy should at last get the better of him, he thought it advisable to leave at Palermo the character of sanctity he had acquired, and begin somewhere else upon a new score. He embarked for Naples, and was soon admitted into a Capuchin convent there.

At Pasqual knew from experience that the dull uniformity of the monastic life required some little amusements to render it supportable, the first thing he set about was to find a mistress. He made love to a lady of easy virtue, who soon admitted his addresses, but at the same time informed him, that he had a very formidable rival, who was jealous as a tiger, and would not fail to put them both to death should he discover the intrigue. This was no other than a lifeguard-man, a fellow of six feet two inches, with a vast spada, like that of Goliath, and a monstrous pair of curled whiskers, that would have cast a damp on the heart of any man but Fra Pasqual : but the monastic life had not yet enervated him ; he was accustomed to danger, and loved a few difficulties : however, as in his present character he could not be on a footing with his rival, he thought it best only to make use of prudence and stratagem to supplant him : these are the ecclesiastical arms, and they have generally been found too hard for the military.—The lady promised him an interview so soon as the court should go to Portici, where the lifeguard-man's duty obliged him to attend the king. Pasqual waited with impatience for some time ;—at last the wished-for night arrived ;—the king set off, after the opera,

with all his guards. Pasqual flew like lightning to the arms of his mistress; the preliminaries were soon settled, and the happy lovers had just fallen asleep, when they were suddenly alarmed by a rap and a well known voice at the door. The lady started up in an agony of despair, assuring Pasqual that they were both undone; that this was her lover, and if some expedient was not fallen upon, in the first transports of his fury, he would certainly put them both to death. There was no time for reflection; the life-guard-man demanded entrance in the most peremptory manner, and the lady was obliged to instant compliance. Pasqual had just time to gather his rags together, and cram himself in below the bed; at that instant the door opened, and the giant came in, rattling his arms and storming at his mistress, for having made him wait so long; however, she soon pacified him. He then ordered her to strike a light, that he might see to undress:—this struck Pasqual to the soul, and he gave himself up for lost; however, the lady's address saved him, when he least expected it. In bringing the tinder, she took care to let fall some water into the box; and all the beating she and her lover could beat, they could not produce one spark. Every stroke of the flint sounded in Pasqual's ears like his death-knell; but when he heard the lifeguard-man swearing at the tinder for not kindling, he began to conceive some hopes, and blessed the fertile invention of woman.—The lady told him he might easily get a light at the guard, which was at no great distance.—Pasqual's heart leaped with joy;—but when the soldier answered that he was absent without leave, and durst not be seen, it again began to flag;—but on his ordering *her* to go—it died within him, and he now found himself in greater danger than ever. The lady herself was confounded; but quickly recovering, she told him, it would be too long before she could get dressed; but



but advised him to go to the corner of a neighbouring street, wherethere was a lamp burning before the Virgin Mary, who could have no objection to his lighting a candle at it.—Pasqual revived ;—but the soldier declared he was too much fatigued with his walk, and would rather undress in the dark ; he at the same time began to grope below the bed for a bottle of liquor, which he knew stood there.—Pasqual shook like a quaker, —however, still he escaped.—The lady observing what he was about, made a spring, and got him the bottle, at the very instant he was within an inch of seizing Pasqual's head.—The lady then went to bed, and told her lover, as it was a cold night, she would warm his place for him. Pasqual admired her address, and began to conceive some hopes of escaping. His situation was the most irksome in the world ; the bed was so low, that he had no room to move ; and when the great heavy lifeguard-man entered it, he found himself squeezed down to the ground. He lay trembling and stifling his breath for some time, but found it absolutely impossible to support his situation till morning ; and indeed, if it had, his clothes, which were scattered about, must infallibly discover him ; he therefore began to think of making his escape ; but he could not move without alarming his rival, who was now lying above him : at first he thought of rushing suddenly out, and throwing himself into the street ; but this he disdained, and, on second thoughts, determined to seize the lifeguard-man's sword ; and either put him to death, or make an honourable capitulation both for himself and the lady. In the midst of these reflections, his rival began to snore, and Pasqual declares that no music was ever so grateful to his soul. He tried to stir a little, and finding that it did not awake the enemy, he by degrees worked himself entirely out of his prison. He immediately laid hold of the great spada ;—when all his

his fears forsook him, and he grew as bold as a lion. He now relinquished the dastardly scheme of escaping, and only thought how he could best retaliate on his rival, for all that he had made him suffer.—As Pasqual was stark naked, it was no more trouble to him to put on the soldier's clothes than his own; and as both his cloak and his cappouch together were not worth a sixpence, he thought it most eligible to equip himself à la militaire, and to leave his sacerdotal robes to the soldier. In a short time he was dressed cap-a-pie. His greasy cowl, his cloak, his sandals, his rosary, and his rope of discipline, he gathered together, and placed on a chair before the bed; and girding himself with a great buff belt, instead of the cordon of St. Francis, and grasping his trusty Toledo instead of the crucifix, he sallied forth into the street. He pondered for some time what scheme to fall upon; and at first thought of returning in the character of another lifeguard-man, pretending to have been sent by the officer with a guard in quest of his companion, who not being found in his quarters, was supposed to have deserted:—and thus, after having made him pay heartily for all that he had suffered below the bed, to leave him to the enjoyment of his pannic, and the elegant suit of clothes he had provided him. However, he was not satisfied with this revenge, and determined on one still more solid. He went to the guard, and told the officer that he had met a Capuchin friar, with all the ensigns of his sanctity about him, sculking through the streets, in the dead of night, when they pretend to be employed in prayer for the sins of mankind. That his curiosity prompted him to follow him; that, as he expected, the holy friar went straight to the house of a celebrated courtesan; that he saw him admitted, and listened at the window till he heard them go to bed together: that if he did not find this information to be true, he should resign himself his prisoner, and submit to whatever punishment

punishment he thought proper. The officer and his guard delighted to have such a hold of a Capuchin, (who pretend to be the very models of sanctity, and who reviled in a particular manner the licentious life of the military) turned out with the utmost alacrity, and, under the conduct of Pasqual, soon surrounded the lady's house. Pasqual began thundering at the door; and demanded entrance for the officer and his guard. The unhappy soldier waking with the noise, and not doubting that it was a detachment sent to seize him, gave himself up to despair, and instantly took shelter in the very place that Pasqual had so lately occupied; at the same time laying hold of all the things he found on the chair, never doubting that they were his own clothes. As the lady was somewhat dilatory in opening the door, Pasqual pretended to put his foot to it, when up it flew, and entering with the officer and his guard, demanded the body of a Capuchin friar, who they were informed lodged with her that night. As the lady had heard Pasqual go out, and had no suspicion that he would inform against himself, she protested her innocence in the most solemn manner, taking all the saints to witnesses that she knew no such person: but Pasqual suspecting the retreat of the lover, began groping below the bed, and soon pulled out his own greasy cowl and cloak. — “Here (said he to the officer)—here are proofs enough:—I'll answer for it, *Signor Padre* himself is at no great distance.”—And putting his nose below the bed;—“Fogh, (says he) I smell him;—he stinks like a fox. The surest method of finding a Capuchin, is by the nose; you may wind him a mile off.”—Then lowering their lanthorn, they beheld the unfortunate lover squeezed in betwixt the bed and the ground, almost stifled.—“*Ecco lo*, (said Pasqual) here he is, with all the ensigns of his holiness;” and pulling them out one by one,—the crucifix, the rosary, and the cord of discipline.—“You  
“ may



“ may see (said he) that the reverend father came  
 “ here to do penance ;”—and taking up the cord,—  
 “ Suppose now we should assist him in this meritori-  
 “ ous work, *Audiamo, Signor Padre,—audiamo.*—  
 “ We will save you the trouble of inflicting it your-  
 “ self ;—and whether you came here to sin, or to re-  
 “ pent, by your own maxims, you know, a little  
 “ sound discipline is always healthful to the soul.”—  
 The guard were lying round the bed, in convulsions  
 of laughter ; and began breaking the most galling  
 and most insolent jokes upon the supposed padre.—  
 The lifeguard-man absolutely thought himself en-  
 charmed,—He at last ventured to speak,—and declared  
 they were all in a mistake ;—that he was no Capuchin :  
 —upon which the laugh redoubled, and the coarsest  
 jokes were repeated. The lady, in the mean time,  
 with the best dissembled marks of fear and astonish-  
 ment, ran about the room, exclaiming—“ *Oime Si-*  
 “ *amo perduti,—Siamo incantati,—Siamo inforcelati.*”—  
 Pasqual delighted to see that his plan had taken its  
 full effect, thought it now time to make his retreat,  
 before the lifeguard-man could have an opportunity  
 of examining his clothes, and perhaps detecting him :  
 he therefore pretended regimental business, and re-  
 gretting much that he was obliged to go to Portici,  
 took his leave of the officer and his guard, at the  
 same time recommending by all means, to treat the  
 holy father with all that reverence and respect that  
 was due to so sacred a person,

The lifeguard-man, when he got out from below  
 the bed, began to look about for his clothes ; but ob-  
 serving nothing but the greasy weeds of a Capuchin  
 friar, he was now perfectly convinced, that Heaven  
 had delivered him over, for his offences, to the power  
 of some dæmon ; (for of all mortals, the Neapolitan  
 soldiers are the most superstitious)—The lady too,  
 acted her part so well, that he had no longer any  
 doubt

doubt of it.—“ Thus it is (said he in a penitential voice) to offend heaven!—I own my sin.—I knew it was Friday, and yet—O, flesh, flesh!—Had it been any other day, I still should have remained what I was.—O, St. Gennaro! I pass’d thee \* too without paying the due respect:—thy all-seeing eye has found me out.”

“ Gentlemen, do with me what you please;—I am not what I seem to be.”—“ No, no (said the officer) we are sensible of that.—But, come, Signor Padre, on with your garments, and march;—we have no time to trifle.—Here, Corporal—giving him the cordon) tie his hands, and let him feel the weight of St. Francis.—The saint owes him that, for having so impudently denied him for his master.”—The poor soldier was perfectly passive;—they arrayed him in the sandals, the cowl, and the cloak of Fra Pasqual, and put the great rosary about his neck; and a most woeful figure he made.—The officer made him look in the glass, to try if he could recollect himself, and asked if he was a Capuchin now or not.—He was shocked at his own appearance; but bore every thing with meekness and resignation. They then conducted him to the guard, belabouring him all the way with the cord of St. Francis, and asking him every stroke, if he knew his master now?—

In the mean time, Pasqual was snug in his convent, enjoying the sweets of his adventure. He had a spare cloak and cowl, and was soon equipped again like one of the holy fathers; he then took the clothes and accoutrements of the lifeguard-man, and laid them in a heap, near the gate of another convent of Capuchins, but at a great distance from his own, reserving only to himself a trifle of money which he found in the breeches pocket, just to indemnify him for the loss of his cloak and his cowl; and even this, he says, he

\* A celebrated statue of St. Januarius, betwixt Portici and Naples.

should

should have held sacred, but he knew whoever should find the clothes, would certainly make lawful prize of it.

The poor soldier remained next day a spectacle of ridicule to all the world; at last his companions heard of his strange metamorphosis, and came in troops to see him: their jokes were perhaps still more galling than those of the guard, but as he thought himself under the finger of God, or at least of St. Januarius, he bore all with meekness and patience;—at last his clothes were found, and he was set at liberty;—but he believes to this day, that the whole was the work of the devil, sent to chastize him for his sins; and has never since seen his mistress on a Friday, nor passed the statue of St. Januarius without muttering a prayer. Fra Pasqual has told the story to several of his most intimate friends, whom he can depend on, amongst whom is the Abbé T-t-i, who has often had it from his own mouth.

I beg pardon for this long story; had I suspected that it would have run out to half this length, I assure you, I should not have troubled you with it. Perhaps, however, you will think this apology precisely the most unnecessary, and most impertinent part of it all.—This is often the fate of apologies, particularly for long letters; First, because it always makes them longer;—Secondly,—Hey-day! where are we going now?—To return then to our subject. We had no sooner left the Capuchin convent, than our carriage broke down, long before we reached the city: and as walking (at Palermo as well as Naples) is of all things the most disgraceful, we risked by this unfortunate accident to have our characters blasted for ever. However, Philip, our Sicilian servant, took care to make such a noise about it, that our dignity did not much suffer. He kept a little distance before us, pesting and blasting all the way at their cursed crazy carriages;—and swearing that there never was any thing in the world so infamous: that in a city like  
Palermo,



Palermo, the capital of all Sicily, Signori of our rank and dignity should be obliged to walk on foot; that it must be an eternal reflection against the place,—and bawled out to every person he met, if there was no coaches to be had; no carriages of any kind, either for love or money. In short, we had not got half through the street, before we had several offers from gentlemen of our acquaintance, who lamented exceedingly the indignity we had suffered, and wondered much, that we did not rather send forward a servant for another coach, and wait (in the heat of the sun) till it arrived.

This is not the only time that Philip's wits have been of service to us on such occasions. A few nights ago, we had a dispute with our coachman, turned him off, and had not provided another. We were unfortunately engaged to go to the great conversation. —What was to be done?—No such thing as walking. —Should we be caught in the fact, we are disgraced for ever.—It would be much worse than to be caught in that of adultery. —No alternative, however.—There was not a coach to be had,—and our old coachman would not serve us for one night only.—Philip made sad wry faces, and swore the coachman ought to be crucified;—but when he saw us bent on walking, he was still more distressed; and I really believe, if we had been discovered, that he would not have served us any longer.—He therefore set his wits to work, how he should preserve both his masters honour and his own place.—He at first hesitated, before he would take up the flambeau; but he would by no means be prevailed on to light it.—“What, (says Philip) do you think I have no more regard for you, than to expose you to the eyes of the whole world? “No, no, Gentlemen; if you will bring yourselves to disgrace, you shall not at least make me the agent of shewing it: but remember, if you are observed walking, no mortal will believe you keep a coach; “and

“and do you expect after that to be received into company?” — “Well, well, Philip, do as you please, but we must go to the conversation.” — Philip shrugged up his shoulders. — “*Diabolo—che faremo—Andiamo, dunque Signori,—andiamo.*” — So saying, he led the way, and we followed.

Philip had studied the geography of the town; he conducted us through lanes only known to himself, and carefully avoided the great street; till at last we arrived at a little entry, which leads to the conversation rooms; here the carriages usually stop. We slipped up the entry in the dark; when Philip, darting into a shop, lighted his flambeau in an instant, and came rushing before us, bawling out. — *Piazza per gli Signori forrestieri;* — when all the world immediately made way for us. — After we had got into the rooms, he called so loud after us, asking at what time he should order the coach to return; that, overcome partly by risibility, and partly by a consciousness of the deceit, not one of us had power to answer him. Philip, however, followed us, and repeated the question so often, that we were obliged to give him a reply, — “*a mezzo notte.*” — At midnight he came to tell us that the coach was ready. — We were curious to see how he would behave on this occasion; for it was not half so difficult to get in unobserved, as to get out: however, Philip’s genius was equal to both. — So soon as we got into the entry, he run to the door, bawling out Antonio, as hard as he could roar. — No Antonio answered; — and unfortunately, there was a number of gentlemen and ladies in the entry, going away at the same time. They begged of us, as strangers, to step first into our carriage, and absolutely refused to go out before us. — Philip was sadly puzzled. — He first ran up the street, then he ran down, and came back all out of breath, cursing Antonio. — “That rascal (said he) is never in the way,  
and

“ and you must turn him off.—He pretends that he  
 “ could not get up his coach to the door, for the  
 “ great croud of carriages, and is waiting about fifty  
 “ yards below.—Vostri Eccellenzi had better step  
 “ down (said Philip) otherwise you will be obliged  
 “ to wait here at least half an hour.”—We took  
 leave of the company and set off.—Philip ran like a  
 lamp-lighter, till he had almost passed the carriages;  
 when dashing his flambeau on the ground, as if by  
 accident, he extinguished it, and getting into a nar-  
 row lane, he waited till we came up, when he whis-  
 pered us to follow him, and conducted us back by  
 the same labyrinth we had come, and thus saved us  
 from eternal infamy.—However, he assures us, that  
 he will not venture it again for his place.

Now what do you think of a nation where such  
 prejudices as these prevail?—It is pretty much the  
 case all over Italy.—An Italian nobleman is ashamed  
 of nothing so much as making use of his legs;—they  
 think their dignity augments by the repose of their  
 members, and that no man can be truly respectable  
 that does not loll away one half of his time on a  
 sofa, or in a carriage.—In short, a man is obliged to  
 be indolent and effeminate, not to be despised and ri-  
 culous.—What can we expect of such a nation?—Can  
 these people be capable of any thing great or manly,  
 who, one would think, are almost ashamed to appear  
 men?—I own it surpasses my comprehension; and I  
 bless my stars every time that I think of honest John  
 Bull, even with all his faults.—Will you believe me,  
 that of all that I have known in Italy, there are scarce  
 half a dozen that have had fortitude enough to sub-  
 due this wretched and ignominious, this most con-  
 temptible of all human prejudices.—The prince of  
 Campo Franco too, in this place, is totally above it.  
 He is a noble fellow, and both in his person and cha-  
 racter greatly resembles our late worthy friend general  
 Craufurd; he is a major-general too, and always  
 Vol. II. R dresses



dress in his uniform, which still increases the resemblance. Every time I see him, he says or does something that recalls strongly to my mind the idea of our noble general.—He laughs at the follies of his country, and holds these wretched prejudices in that contempt they deserve.—“What would the old hardy Romans think (said he, talking on this subject) were they permitted to take a view of the occupations of their progeny?—I should like to see a Brutus or a Cassius amongst us for a little;—how the clumsy vulgar fellows would be hooted.—I dare say they would soon be glad to return to the shades again.”

Adieu.—For some nights past we have been observing the course of a comet; and as we were the first people here that took notice of it, I assure you we are looked upon as very profound astronomers.—I shall say more of it next letter.—We have now got out of our abominable inn, and have taken a final leave of our French landlady.—The count Buschemi, a very amiable young man, has been kind enough to provide us a lodging on the sea-shore, one of the coolest and most agreeable in Palermo.

Ever yours, &c.

## LETTER XXIV.

Palermo, July 2d.

**O**UR comet is now gone; we first observed it on the 24th. It had no tail, but was surrounded with a faintish ill defined light, that made it look like a bright star shining through a thin cloud. This in all probability is owing to an atmosphere around the body of the comet, that causes a refraction of the rays, and prevents them from reaching us with that distinctness we observe in bodies that have no atmosphere.—

We

We were still the more persuaded of this two nights ago, when we had the good fortune to catch the comet just passing close by a small fixed star, whose light was not only considerably dimmed, but we thought we observed a sensible change of place in the star, so soon as its rays fell into the atmosphere of the comet; owing, no doubt, to the refraction in passing through that atmosphere.—We attempted to trace the line of the comet's course, but as we could find no globe, it was not possible to do it with any degree of precision.—Its direction was almost due north, and its velocity altogether amazing. We did not observe it so minutely the two or three first nights of its appearance; but on the 30th it was at our zenith here (latitude  $38^{\circ} 10'$ , longitude from London  $13^{\circ}$ ) exactly at five minutes after midnight; and last night, the 1st of July, it passed about four degrees to the east of the polar star, precisely at 40 minutes after 8; so that in less than 24 hours it has described a great arch in the heavens, upwards of 50 degrees, which gives an idea of the most inconceivable velocity. Supposing it at the distance of the sun, at this rate of travelling it would go round the earth's orbit in less than a week, which makes, I think, considerably more than sixty millions of miles in a day; a motion that vastly surpasses all human comprehension. And as this motion continues to be immensely accelerated, what must it be when the comet approaches still nearer to the body of the sun! Last night a change of place was distinctly observable in the space of a few minutes, particularly when it passed near any of the fixed stars. We attempted to find if it had any observable parallax, but the vast rapidity of its motion always prevented us; for whatever fixed stars it was near in the horizon, it had got so far to the north of them, long before it reached the meridian, that the parallax, if there was any, entirely escaped us. I shall long much to see the observations that have been made,

and in other distant countries, on this comet ; as from these we shall probably be enabled to form some judgment of its distance from the earth, which, although we could observe no parallax, I am apt to believe was not very great, as its motion was so extremely perceptible.—We could procure no instruments to measure its apparent distance from any of the fixed stars ; so that the only two observations any thing can be made of, are, the time of its passing the polar star last night, its distance from it, and the time of its arrival at our zenith on the 30th ; this we found by applying the eye to a straight rod hung perpendicularly from a small thread. The comet was not in the exact point of the zenith, but, to the best of our observation, about six or seven minutes to the north of it ; this happened exactly at five minutes after midnight. Last night it was visible almost immediately after sun-set, long before any of the fixed stars appeared. It is now immersed in the rays of the sun, and has certainly got very near his body. If it returns again to the regions of space, it will probably be visible in a few days ; but I own I should much doubt of any such return, if it is really by the attractive force of the sun that it is at present carried with such amazing celerity towards him. This is the third comet of this kind whose return I have had an opportunity of watching, but never was fortunate enough to find any of them after they had passed the sun ; though those that do really return, appear at that time much more luminous than before they approached him.—The astronomy of comets, from what I can remember of it, appears to be clogged with very great difficulties, and even some seeming absurdities. It is extremely difficult to conceive, that these immense bodies, after being drawn to the sun with the inconceivable velocity of a million of miles in an hour, when they have at last come almost to touch him, should then fly off from his body with the same velocity they approached it ; and that too  
by



by the power of this very motion that his attraction has occasioned.—The demonstration of this, I remember, is very curious and ingenious; but I wish it may be entirely free from sophistry. No doubt, in bodies moving in curves round a fixed centre, as the centripetal motion increases, the centrifugal one increases likewise;—but how this motion, which is only generated by the former, should at last get the better of the power that produces it, and that too at the very time that that power has acquired its utmost force and energy, seems somewhat difficult to conceive.—It is the only instance I know, wherein the effect increasing regularly with the cause, at last, whilst the cause is still acting with its utmost force, the effect entirely gets the better of the cause, and leaves it in the lurch; for, the body attracted, is at last carried away with infinite velocity from the attracting body.—By what power is it carried away?—Why, say our philosophers, by the very power of this attraction, which has now produced a new power superior to itself, to wit, the centrifugal force. However, perhaps, all this may be very reconcileable to reason; far be it from me to presume attacking so glorious a system as that of attraction.—The law that the heavenly bodies are said to observe, in describing equal areas in equal times, is supposed to be demonstrated; and by this it would appear, that the centripetal and centrifugal forces alternately get the mastery of one another.

However, I cannot help thinking it somewhat difficult to conceive, that gravity should always get the better of the centrifugal force, at the very time that its action is the smallest, when the comet is at its greatest distance from the sun; and that the centrifugal force should always get the better of gravity, at the very time that its action is the greatest, when the comet is at its nearest point to the sun.

To a common observer it would rather appear that the sun, like an electric body, after it had once charged the objects that it attracted with its own effluvia, or atmosphere, by degrees loses its attraction, and at last even repels them; and that the attracting power, like what we observe in electricity, does not return again till the effluvia imbibed from the attracting body is dispelled or dissipated; when it is again attracted, and so on alternately. For (at least to an unphilosophical observer) it really appears somewhat repugnant to reason to say, that a body flying off from another body, some thousands of miles in a minute, should all the time be violently attracted by that body; and that it is even by virtue of this very attraction that it is flying off from it:—He would probably ask,—What more could it do, pray, were it really to be repelled?

Had the system of electricity, and of repulsion as well as attraction, been known and established in the last age, I have little doubt that the profound genius of Newton would have called it to its aid, and perhaps accounted, in a more satisfactory manner, for many of the great phænomena of the heavens. To the best of my remembrance, we know of no body that possesses, in any considerable degree, the power of attraction, that in certain circumstances does not likewise possess the power of repulsion.—The magnet, the tourmalin, amber, glass, and every electrical substance.—Now, from analogy, as we find the sun so powerfully endowed with attraction, why may we not likewise suppose him to be possessed of repulsion? Indeed, this very power seems to be confessed by the Newtonians to reside in the sun in a most wonderful degree; for they assure us, he repels the rays of light with such amazing force, that they fly upwards of eighty millions of miles in seven minutes. Now why should we confine this repulsion to the rays of light only?—As they are material, may not other matter

matter brought near his body be affected in the same manner? Indeed one would imagine, that their motion alone would create the most violent repulsion, and that the force with which they are perpetually flowing from the sun, would most effectually prevent every other body from approaching him; for this we find is the constant effect of a rapid stream of any other matter. But let us examine a little more his effects on comets.—The tails of these bodies are probably their atmospheres rendered highly electrical, either from the violence of their motion, or from their proximity to the sun.—Of all the bodies we know, there is none in so constant and so violent an electrical state as the higher regions of our own atmosphere. Of this I have long been convinced; for, send up a kite with a small wire about its string, only to the height of 12 or 1300 feet, and at all times it will produce fire, as I have found by very frequent experience; sometimes, when the air was perfectly clear, without a cloud in the hemisphere; at other times, when it was thick and hazy, and totally unfit for electrical operations below. Now, as this is the case at so small a height, and as we find the effect still grows stronger, in proportion as the kite advances (for I have sometimes observed, that a little blast of wind, suddenly raising the kite about a hundred feet, has more than doubled the effect) what must it be in very great elevations?—Indeed we may often judge of it from the violence with which the clouds are agitated, from the meteors formed above the region of the clouds, and particularly from the aurora borealis; which has been observed to have much the same colour and appearance as the matter which forms the tails of comets.

Now what must be the effect of so vast a body as our atmosphere, made strongly electrical, when it happens to approach any other body?—It must always be either violently attracted or repelled, accord-



ing to the positive or negative quality (in the language of electricians) of the body that it approaches.

It has ever been observed that the tails of comets (just as we should expect from a very light fluid body attached to a solid heavy one) are drawn after the comets, as long as they are at a distance from the sun; but so soon as the comet gets near his body, the tail veers about to that side of the comet that is in the opposite direction from the sun, and no longer follows the comet, but continues its motion sideways, opposing its whole length to the medium through which it passes, rather than allow it in any degree to approach the sun. Indeed, its tendency to follow the body of the comet is still observable, were it not prevented by some force superior to that tendency; for the tail is always observed to bend a little to that side from whence the comet is flying. This, perhaps, is some proof too, that it does not move in an absolute vacuum.

When the comet reaches its perihelion, the tail is generally very much lengthened, perhaps by the rarefaction from the heat;—perhaps by the increase of the sun's repulsion, or that of his atmosphere. It still continues projected, exactly in the opposite direction from the sun; and when the comet moves off again to the regions of space, the tail, instead of following it, as it did on its approach, is projected a vast way before it, and still keeps the body of the comet exactly opposed betwixt it and the sun, till by degrees, as the distance increases, the length of the tail is diminished, the repulsion probably becoming weaker and weaker.

It has likewise been observed, that the length of these tails are commonly in proportion to the proximity of the comet to the sun. That of 1680 threw out a train that would almost have reached from the  
sun

sun to the earth. If this had been attracted by the sun, would it not have fallen upon his body, when the comet at that time was not one fourth of his diameter distant from him? But instead of this, it was darted away to the opposite side of the heavens, even with a greater velocity than that of the comet itself.—Now what can this be owing to, if not to a repulsive power in the sun, or his atmosphere?—

And, indeed, it would at first appear but little less absurd to say, that the tail of the comet is all this time violently attracted by the sun, although it is drove away in an opposite direction from him, as to say the same of the comet itself. It is true, this repulsion seems to begin much sooner to affect the tail than the body of the comet; which is supposed always to pass the sun before it begins to fly away from him, which is by no means the case with the tail. The repulsive force, therefore, (if there is any such) is in a much less proportion than the attractive one, and probably just only enough to counterbalance the latter, when these bodies are in their perihelions, and to turn them so much aside, as to prevent them falling into the body of the sun. The projectile force they have acquired will then carry them out to the heavens, and repulsion probably diminishing as they recede from the sun's atmosphere, his attraction will again take place, and retard their motion regularly, till they arrive at their aphelia, when they once more begin to return to him.

I don't know how you will like all this;—Our comet has led me a dance I very little thought of; and I believe I should have done better to send it at once into the sun, and had done with it: and that, indeed, I am apt to believe, will be its fate. For as this comet has no tail, there is of consequence, no apparent repulsion. If it was repelled, its atmosphere, like the others, would be drove away in the opposite direction from

from the sun; I therefore do not see any possible method it has of escaping.

These comets are certainly bodies of a very different nature from those with tails, to which indeed they appear even to bear a much less resemblance than they do to planets: and it is no small proof of the little progress we have made in the knowledge of the universe, that they have not as yet been distinguished by a different name.

This is the third kind of body that has been discovered in our system, that all appear essentially different from each other, that are probably regulated by different laws, and intended for very different purposes.—How much will posterity be astonished at our ignorance, and wonder that this system should have existed for so many thousand years, before we were in the least acquainted with one half of it, or had even invented names to distinguish its different members.

I have no doubt, that in future ages, the number of the comets, the form of their orbits, and time of their revolutions, will be as clearly demonstrated as that of the planets. It is our countryman, Dr. Halley, who has begun this great work, which may be considered just now as in its earliest infancy.—These bodies too, with thick atmospheres, but without tails; will likewise have their proper places ascertained, and will no longer be confounded with bodies to which they bear no resemblance or connection.

Comets with tails have seldom been visible, but on their recess from the sun. It is he that kindles them up, and gives them that alarming appearance in the heavens.—On the contrary, those without tails have seldom, perhaps never, been observed, but on their approach to him.—I don't recollect any whose return has been well ascertained. I remember, indeed, a few years ago, a small one, that was said to have been  
discovered



discovered by a telescope, after it had passed the sun, but never more became visible to the naked eye. This assertion is easily made, and nobody can contradict it; but it does not at all appear probable, that it should have been so much less luminous after it had passed the sun, than before it approached him; and I will own to you, when I have heard that the return of these comets had escaped the eyes of the most acute astronomers, I have been tempted to think, that they did not return at all, but were absorbed in the body of the sun, which their violent motion towards him seemed to indicate.—Indeed, I have often wished that this discovery might be made, as it would in some measure account for what has as yet been looked upon as unaccountable: that the sun, notwithstanding his daily waste, from enlightening the universe, never appears diminished either in size or light.—Surely this waste must be immense, and were there not in nature some hidden provision for supplying it, in the space of six thousand years, supposing the world to be no older, the planets must have got to a much greater distance from his body, by the vast diminution of his attraction; they must likewise have moved much slower, and consequently the length of our year must have been greatly increased.—Nothing of all this seems to be the case: the diameter of the sun is the same that ever it was: he neither appears diminished, nor our distance from him increased: his light, heat, and attraction seem to be the same as ever; and the motion of the planets round him is performed in the same time; of consequence, his quantity of matter still continues the same.—How then is this vast waste supplied?—May there not be millions of bodies attracted by him, from the boundless regions of space, that are never perceived by us? Comets, on their road to him, have several times been accidentally discovered by telescopes, that were never seen by the naked eye.—

eye.—Indeed, the number of black spots on the sun seem to indicate that there is always a quantity of matter there, only in a preparation to give light, but not yet refined and pure enough to throw off rays like the rest of his body. For I think we can hardly conceive, that any matter can remain long on the body of the sun without becoming luminous; and so we find these spots often disappear, that is to say, the matter of which they are composed is then perfectly melted, and has acquired the same degree of heat and light as the rest of his body.—Even in our glass-houses, and other very hot furnaces, most sorts of matter very soon acquire the same colour and appearance as the matter in fusion, and emit rays of light like it. But how much more must this be the case at the surface of the sun! when Newton computes, that even at many thousand miles distant from it, a body would acquire a degree of heat two thousand times greater than that of red hot iron. It has generally been understood, that Newton said the great comet really did acquire this degree of heat; but this is certainly a mistake: Sir Isaac's expression, to the best of my remembrance, is, that it might have acquired it. And if we consider the very great size of that body, and the short time of its perihelion, the thing will appear impossible: nor indeed do I think we can conceive, that a body only as large as our Earth (and the spots on the sun are often much larger) could be reduced to fusion, even on his surface, but after a very considerable space of time.

Now, as it seems to be universally supposed, that the rays of light are really particles of matter, proceeding from the body of the sun, I think it is absolutely necessary that we should fall upon some such method of sending him back a supply of those rays, otherwise, let his stock be ever so great, it must at last be exhausted.

I wish

I wish astronomers would observe if the spots on the sun are not increased after the appearing of these comets; and if these spots do not disappear again by degrees, like a body that is gradually melted down in a furnace. But there is another consideration too, which naturally occurs: pray what becomes of all this vast quantity of matter after it is reduced to light?—Is it ever collected again into solid bodies; or is it forever lost and dissipated, after it has made its journey from the sun to the object it illuminates?—It is somewhat strange, that of all that immense quantity of matter poured down on us during the day, that pervades and fills the whole universe, the moment we are deprived of the luminous body, the whole of it, in an instant, seems to be annihilated:—in short, there are a number of difficulties attending the common received doctrine of light; nor do I think there is any point in natural philosophy the solution of which is less satisfactory. If we suppose every ray to be a stream of particles of matter, darting from the luminous body, how can we conceive that these streams may be intersected and pierced by other streams of the same matter ten thousand thousand different ways, without causing the least confusion either to the one or the other? for in a clear night we see distinctly any particular star that we look at, although the rays coming from that star to our eye is pierced for millions of miles before it reaches us, by millions of streams of the same rays, from every other sun and star in the universe. Now suppose, in any other matter that we know of (and one would imagine there ought at least to be some sort of analogy) suppose, I say, we should only attempt to make two streams pass one another; water, for instance, or air, the purest and the most fluid matter that we know, we find it totally impossible.—The two streams will mutually interrupt and  
incommode



incommode one another, and the strongest will ever carry off the weakest into its own direction ; but if a stream of light is hit by ten thousand other streams, moving at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, it is not even bent by the impression, nor in the smallest degree diverted from its course ; and it reaches us with the same precision and regularity, as if nothing had interfered with it at all. Besides, on the supposition that light is real particles of matter moving from the sun to the earth, in the space of seven minutes, how comes it to pass, that with all this wonderful velocity, there seems to be no momentum ? for it communicates motion to no body that obstructs its passage, and no body is removed by the percussion.—Supposing we had never heard of this discovery, and were at once to be told of a current of matter flying at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, and so large as to cover one half of our globe, would we not imagine that the earth must instantly be torn to pieces by it, or carried off with the most incredible velocity ? It will be objected, that the extreme minuteness of the particles of light prevents it from having any such effect ;—but as these particles are in such quantity, and so close to each other, as to cover the surface of every body that is opposed to them, and entirely to fill up that vast space betwixt the earth and the sun, this objection I should think in a great measure falls to the ground. The particles of air and of water are likewise extremely minute, and a small quantity of these will produce little or no effect, but increase their number, and only give them the millionth part of the velocity that is ascribed to a ray of light, and no force whatever could be able to withstand them.

Adieu.—I have unwarily run myself into the very deeps of philosophy ; and find it rather difficult

to struggle out again.—I ask your pardon, and promise, if possible, for the future, to steer quite clear of them.—I am sure, whatever this comet may be to the universe, it has been an ignis fatuus to me; for it has led me strangely out of my road, and bewildered me amongst rocks and quicksands, where I was like to stick fifty times.

I have forgot whether or not you are a rigid Newtonian; if you are, I believe I had better recant in time, for fear of accidents. I know this is a very tender point; and have seen many of these gentlemen, who are good Christians too, that can bear with much more temper to hear the divinity of our Saviour called in question, than that of Sir Isaac, and look on a Cartesian or a Ptolemean, as a worse species of infidel than an atheist.

I remember, when I was at college, to have seen a heretic to their doctrine of gravity, very suddenly converted by being tossed in a blanket; and another, who denied the law of centripetal and centrifugal forces, soon brought to assent, from having the demonstration made upon his shoulders, by a stone whirled at the end of a string.

These are powerful arguments, and it is difficult to withstand them.—I cry you mercy.—I am without reach of you at present, and you are heartily welcome to wreck your vengeance on my letter.

L E T-

## LETTER XXV.

Palermo, July 6th.

MANY of the churches here are extremely rich and magnificent. The cathedral (or, as they call it, *Madre Chiesa*) is a very venerable Gothic building, and of a great size; it is supported within by eighty columns of Oriental granite, and divided into a great number of chapels, some of which are extremely rich, particularly that of St. Rosalia, the patroness of Palermo, who is held in greater veneration here, than all the persons of the Trinity; and which is still much more, than even the Virgin Mary herself. The relics of the saint are preserved in a large box of silver, curiously worked, and enriched with precious stones. They perform many miracles, and are looked upon as the greatest treasure of the city. They are esteemed a most effectual remedy against the plague, and have often preserved them from that fatal distemper. The saint gained so much credit, in saving them from the last plague of Messina, although it was at two hundred miles distance, that they have, out of gratitude, erected a noble monument to her.—St. Agatha did as much for Catania; but that city has not been so generous to her.—The other riches of this church consist principally in some bones of St. Peter, and a whole arm of St. John the Baptist.—There is likewise a jaw-bone of prodigious efficacy; and some other bones of lesser note.—It contains some things of less consequence, which, however, are not altogether without their merit. The monuments of their Norman kings, several of whom lie buried here, are of the finest porphyry, some of them near 700 years old, and yet of very tolerable workmanship. Opposite to these, there is a tabernacle entirely of lapis lazuli. It is  
about



about fifteen feet high, and finely ornamented. Some of the presents made to St. Rosalia are by no means contemptible. A cross of very large brilliants, from the king of Spain, is, I think, the most considerable.

The Sacristie too is very rich: There are some robes embroidered over with Oriental pearl, that are near four hundred years old, and yet look as fresh as if done yesterday.

The Jesuits church is equal in magnificence to any thing I have seen in Italy.—The genius of these fathers appear strong in all their works; one is never at a loss to find them out. They have been grossly calumniated; for they certainly had less hypocrisy than any other order of monks.

The Chiesa del Pellazzo is entirely encrusted over with antient mosaic; and the vaulted roof too is all of the same. But it is endless to talk of churches. Here are upward of three hundred.—That of Monreale, about five miles distant from this city, is the next in dignity in the island, after the cathedral of Palermo. It is nearly of the same size, and the whole is encrusted over with mosaic, at a most incredible expence. Here are likewise several porphyry and marble monuments of the first kings of Sicily. This cathedral was built by King William the Good, whose memory is still held in great veneration amongst the Sicilians.

The archbishop of Monreale is already looked upon as a saint, and indeed he deserves beatification better, I believe, than most of those in the calendar. His income is very great, of which he reserves to himself just as much as procures him clothes, and the simplest kind of food; all the rest he dedicates to charitable, pious, and public uses. He even seems to carry this too far, and denies himself the most common gratifications of life. Such as sleeping on a bed; a piece of luxury he is said never to indulge himself in, but lies every night on straw.—He is, as

you may believe, adored by the people, who crowd in his way as he passes to receive his benediction; which they allege is even of more sovereign efficacy than that of the pope. And indeed so it is, for he never sees an object in distress, but he is sure to relieve him; not trusting to the spiritual efficacy of the blessing alone, but always accompanying it with something solid and temporal; and perhaps this accompaniment is not esteemed the worst part of it. The town and country round Monreale are greatly indebted to his liberality; and in every corner exhibit marks of his munificence. He has just now made a present to the cathedral of a most magnificent altar. Only about one half of it is finished. It is of massive silver, exquisitely worked, representing in high relief some of the principal stories in the Bible, and, I think, will be one of the finest in the world.—But what is of much greater utility, he has at his own expence made a noble walk the whole way from this city to Monreale, which was formerly of very difficult access, as it stands near the top of a pretty high mountain. The walk is cut with a great deal of judgment on the side of this mountain, and winds by easy zig-zags to the top of it. It is adorned with several very elegant fountains of water, and is bordered on each side with a variety of flowering shrubs.—The valley at the foot of the mountain is extremely rich and beautiful. It appears one continued orange garden for many miles, and exhibits an elegant piece of scenery; perfuming the air at the same time with the most delicious odours.—We were so pleased with this little expedition, that notwithstanding the heat of the season, we could not keep in the carriage, but walked almost the whole of it.

The city of Palermo for these ten days past has been wholly occupied in preparing for the great feast of St. Rosalia. And if the show is in any degree adequate to the expence and trouble it costs them, it must indeed



indeed be a very noble one. They are erecting a most incredible number of arches and pyramids for the illuminations. They are of wood, painted, and adorned with artificial flowers. These, they tell us, are to be entirely covered over with small lamps; so that when seen at a little distance, they appear like so many pyramids and arches of flame. The whole Marino, and the two great streets that divide the city, are to be illuminated in this magnificent manner. The number of pyramids and arches prepared for these illuminations, they tell us, exceeds two thousand. They are erected on each side of the street, betwixt the foot path and the pavement, and run in two right lines exactly parallel from end to end. Each of these lines is a mile in length, which makes four miles for the whole. The four gates are the vistas to these four streets, and are to be highly decorated and illuminated. From the square in the centre of the city the whole of this vast illumination can be seen at once; and they assure us the grandeur of it exceeds all belief.—The whole of the Marino is to be dressed out in the same manner; and for these three weeks past, they have been employed in erecting two great theatres for fireworks. One of these fronts the viceroy's palace, and is almost equal to it in size. The other is raised on piles drove in the sea, exactly opposite to the great orchestra in the centre of the Marino.—Besides these, they are building an enormous engine, which they call St. Rosalia's triumphal car. From the size of it, one would imagine that it is for ever to remain in the spot where it is built; but they assure us, it is to be drawn in triumph through the city. It is indeed mounted upon wheels, but it does not appear that any force whatever can be able to turn them. I own my curiosity increases every day to see this singular exhibition. The car is already higher than most houses in Palermo, and they are still adding to its height. But the part of the show they



value themselves the most on, is the illumination of the great church; this they affirm is superior to any thing in the world, the illumination of St. Peter's itself not excepted. The preparations for it are indeed somewhat astonishing. These were begun about a month ago, and will not be finished till towards the last days of the feast. The whole of this vast cathedral, both roof and walls, is entirely covered over with mirror, intermixed with gold and silver paper, and an infinite variety of artificial flowers. All these are arranged and disposed, in my opinion, with great taste and elegance; none of them predominate, but they are intermingled every where in a just proportion.

Every altar, chapel, and column are finished in the same manner, which takes off from the littleness of the particular ornaments, and gives an air of grandeur and uniformity to the whole. The roof is hung with innumerable lustres filled with wax candles, and, I am persuaded, when the whole is lighted up, it must be equal to any palace either in the Fairy Tales or the Arabian Nights Entertainment. Indeed it seems pretty much in the same stile too, for all is gold, silver, and precious stones. The saints are dressed out in all their glory, and the fairy queen herself was never finer than is St. Rosalia.—The people are lying yonder in crowds before her, praying with all their might.—I dare say, for one petition offered to God Almighty, she has at least an hundred.

We were just now remarking, with how little respect they pass the chapels dedicated to God; they hardly deign to give a little inclination of the head; but when they come near those of their favourite saints, they bow down to the very ground: Ignorance and superstition have ever been inseparable:—I believe in their hearts they think he has already reigned long enough; and would be glad to have a change in the government:—and every one of them (like the poor Welchman who thought he should be succeeded

succeeded by Sir Watkin Williams) is fully persuaded, that his own favourite saint is the true heir apparent. Indeed they already give them the precedence on most occasions; not in processions and affairs of etiquette; there they think it would not be decent: But, in their more private affairs, they generally pay the compliment to the saint. Though indeed in their inscriptions on churches and chapels, (which one would think are public enough) when they are dedicated to God Almighty and any particular saint, they have often ventured to put the name of the saint first.—Sancto Januario, et Deo Opt. Max. taking every opportunity of raising their dignity, tho' at the expence of that of God himself.

## LETTER XXVI.

Palermo, July 7th.

I HAVE been enquiring who this same St. Rosalia may be, who has become so very capital a personage in this part of the world; but, notwithstanding their adoring her with such fervency, I have found none that can give any tolerable account of her saintship. They refer you to the most fabulous legends, that even differ widely in their accounts of her. And, after all the offerings they have made, the churches they have built, and monuments they have raised to her memory, I think it is far from being improbable, that there really never did exist such a person. I went through all the booksellers shops, but could find nothing relative to her, except an epic poem, of which she is the heroine. It is in the Sicilian language; and is indeed one of the greatest curiosities I have met with. The poet sets her at once above all other saints, except the Virgin, and it seems to be with the greatest reluctance, that he can prevail upon himself to yield the pas even to her. I find, from this curious

composition, and the notes upon it, that St. Rosolia was niece to King William the Good. That she began very early to display symptoms of her sanctity; That at fifteen she deserted the world and disclaimed all human society. She retired to the mountains on the west of this city; and was never more heard of for about 500 years. She disappeared in the year 1159. The people thought she had been taken up to heaven; till in the year 1624, during the time of a dreadful plague, a holy man had a vision, that the saint's bones were lying in a cave near the top of the Monte Pelegrino. That if they were taken up with due reverence, and carried in procession thrice round the walls of the city, they should immediately be delivered from the plague. At first little attention was paid to the holy man, and he was looked upon as little better than a dreamer; however, he persisted in his story, grew noisy, and got adherents. The magistrates, to pacify them, sent to the Monte Pelegrino; when lo! the mighty discovery was made,—the sacred bones were found,—the city was freed from the plague,—and St. Rosolia became the greatest saint in the calendar.—Churches were reared, altars were dedicated, and ministers appointed to this new divinity; whose dignity and consequence has ever since been supported at the most incredible expence. Now I think it is more than probable that these bones, that are now so much revered, and about which this great city is at present in such a bustle, belonged to some poor wretch that perhaps was murdered, or died for want in the mountains. The holy man probably could have given a very good account of them.

It is really astonishing to think what animals superstition often makes of mankind.—I dare say, the bones of St. Rosolia are just as little intitled to the honours they receive, as those of poor St. Viar, which were found somewhere in Spain under a  
broke



broken tombstone, where these were the only legible letters. The story, I think, is told by Dr. Middleton. The priests found that the bones had an excellent knack at working miracles, and were of opinion that this, together with the St. Viar on the stone, was proof sufficient of his sanctity. He continued long in high estimation, and they drew no inconsiderable revenue from his abilities; till unfortunately they petitioned the pope to grant him some immunities. The pope (Leo the tenth, I think) not entirely satisfied with regard to his saintship, desired to be informed of his pretensions.—A list of his miracles was sent over, accompanied by the stone with *St. Viar* upon it. The first part of the proof was sustained; but the antiquaries discovered the fragment to be part of the tombstone of a (Roman) *præfectus viarum*, or overseer of the high roads, to whose bones they had been so much indebted: And poor St. Viar, though probably an honest man than most of them, was ordered to be struck out of the calendar.

The people of fashion here hold the superstition of the vulgar in great contempt; and perhaps that very superstition is one principal cause of their infidelity. Indeed I have ever found, that deism is most prevalent in those countries where the people are the wildest and most bigotted.—A refined and cultivated understanding, shocked at their folly, thinks it cannot possibly recede too far from it, and is often tempted to fly to the very opposite extreme.—When reason is very much offended by any particular dogma of faith or act of worship, she is but too apt, in the midst of her disgust, to reject the whole. The great misfortune is, that in these countries, the most violent champions for religion are commonly extremely weak and ignorant.—And certainly, one weak advocate, in any cause, but more particularly in a mysterious one, that requires to be handled with great delicacy and address, is capable of hurting it more than

fifty of its most violent opponents — Silly books, that have been writ by weak, well-meaning men, in defence of religion, I am confident have made more infidels than all the works of Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, or even Voltaire himself: They only want to make people believe that there are some ludicrous things to be said against it; but these grave plodding blockheads do all they can to persuade us that there is but little to be said for it.—The universal error of these gentry is, that they ever attempt to explain, and reconcile to sense and reason those very mysteries that the first principles of our religion teach us are incomprehensible; and of consequence neither objects of sense nor reason.—I once heard an ignorant priest declare, that he did not find the least difficulty, in conceiving the mystery of the Trinity, or that of incarnation; and that he would undertake to make them plain to the meanest capacities. A gentleman present told him that he had no doubt he could, to all such capacities as his own.—The priest took it as a compliment, and made him a bow.—Now don't you think, that a few such teachers as this, must hurt religion more by their zeal, than all its opponents can by their wit? Had these heroes still kept behind the bulwarks of faith and of mystery, their adversaries never could have touched them; but they have been foolish enough to abandon these strong holds, and dared them forth to combat on the plain fields of reason and of sense.—A sad piece of generalship indeed: Such defenders must ever ruin the best cause.

But although the people of education here despise the wild superstition of the vulgar, yet they go regularly to mass, and attend the ordinances with great respect and decency; and they are much pleased with us for our conformity to their customs, and for not appearing openly to despise their rites and ceremonies. I own, this attention of theirs, not to offend weak minds, tends very much to give us a favourable opinion both of their hearts and understandings.

ings. They don't make any boast of their infidelity ; neither do they pester you with it as in France, where it is perpetually buzz'd in your ears ; and where, although they pretend to believe less, they do in fact believe more than any nation on the continent.

I know of nothing that gives one a worse opinion of a man, than to see him make a show and parade of his contempt for things held sacred : It is an open insult to the judgment of the public.—A countryman of ours, about two years ago, offended egregiously in this article, and the people still speak of him both with contempt and detestation.—It happened one day, in the great church, during the elevation of the host, when every body else were on their knees, that he still kept standing, without any appearance of respect to the ceremony. A young nobleman that was near him expressed his surprize at this. “ It is strange, “ Sir, (said he) that you, who have had the education of a gentleman, and ought to have the sentiments of one, should choose thus to give so very “ public offence.” “ Why, Sir, (said the English- “ man) I don't believe in transubstantiation.”—— “ Neither do I, Sir, (replied the other) and yet you “ see I kneel.”

Adieu. I am called away to see the preparations for the feast. In my next I shall probably give you some account of it,

P. B.

P. S. I have been watching with great care the return of our comet, but as yet I have discovered nothing of it : I observe too, with a very indifferent glass, several large round spots on the sun's disk, and am far from being certain that it is not one of them : But I shall not alarm you any more with this subject.

LETTER



## LETTER XXVII.

Palermo, July 10th.

ON Sunday, the 8th, we had the long expected Sirocco wind, which, although our expectations of it had been raised pretty high, yet I own it greatly exceeded them. Ever since we came to our new lodging, the thermometer has stood betwixt 72 and 74; at our old one, it was often at 79 and 80; so great is the difference betwixt the heart of the city and the sea-shore. At present, our windows not only front to the North, but the sea is immediately below them, from whence we are perpetually refreshed by a delightful cooling breeze. Friday and Saturday were uncommonly cool, the mercury never being higher than  $72\frac{1}{2}$ ; and although the Sirocco is said to have set in early on Sunday morning, the air in our apartments, which are very large, with high ceilings, was not in the least affected by it at eight o'clock, when I arose.—I opened the door without having any suspicion of such a change; and indeed I never was more astonished in my whole life.—The first blast of it on my face felt like the burning steam from the mouth of an oven. I drew back my head and shut the door, calling out to Fullarton, that the whole atmosphere was in a flame. However, we ventured to open another door that leads to a cool platform, where we usually walk; this was not exposed to the wind; and here I found the heat much more supportable than I could have expected from the first specimen I had of it at the other door. It felt exactly as if we had got into one of the subterraneous sweating stoves at Naples; but still much hotter.—In a few minutes we found every fibre relaxed in a most inconceivable manner, and the pores opened to such a degree, that we expected immediately to be thrown into a most profuse

profuse sweat. I went to examine the thermometer, and found the air in the room as yet so little affected, that it stood only at 73. The preceding night it was at  $72\frac{1}{2}$ . I took it out to the open air, when it immediately rose to 110, and soon after to 112; and I am confident, that in our old lodgings, or any where within the city, it still must have risen several degrees higher. The air was thick and heavy, but the barometer was very little affected; it had fallen only about a line. The sun did not once appear the whole day, otherwise I am persuaded that the heat must have been insupportable; on that side of our platform which is exposed to the wind, it was with difficulty we could bear it for a few minutes. Here I exposed a little pomatum, which was melted down, as if I had laid it before the fire. I attempted to take a walk in the street, to see if any creature was stirring, but I found it too much for me, and was very-glad to get up stairs again.

This amazing heat continued till 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the wind changed at once, almost to the opposite point of the compass, and all the rest of the day it blew strong from the sea.—It is impossible to conceive the different feeling of the air.—Indeed; the sudden change from heat to cold is almost as inconceivable as that from cold to heat. The current of this hot air had been flying for many hours from South to North; and I had no doubt, that the atmosphere, for many miles round, was entirely composed of it; however, the wind was no sooner changed to the North, than it felt extremely cold, and we were obliged very quickly to put on our clothes, for till then we had been almost naked. In a very short time the thermometer sunk to 82, a degree of heat that in England would be thought almost insupportable, and yet I assure you, upon my honour, all that night we were obliged, merely from the cold, to keep up the glasses of our coach, so much were the pores opened and the fibres relaxed by these few hours of the

the Sirocco. Indeed, I had exposed myself a good deal to the open air, as I was determed to feel what effect it would produce on the human body.—At first I thought it must have been altogether impossible to bear it; but I soon discovered my mistake, and found, that where I was sheltered from the wind, I could walk about without any great inconveniency; neither did it produce that copious sweat I expected; it created indeed a very violent perspiration, which, however, was only attended with a slight moisture on the skin; but I suppose, if I had put on my clothes, or taken the least exercise, it soon would have brought it on.

I own to you my curiosity with regard to the Sirocco is now altogether satisfied; nor do I at all wish for another visit of it during our stay in Sicily. Many of our acquaintances who had been promising us this *regalo*, as they call it, came crowding about us so soon as it was over, to know what we thought of it. They own that it has been pretty violent for the time it lasted; but assure us they have felt it more so, and likewise of a much longer duration; however, it seldom lasts more than thirty-six or forty hours, so that the walls of the houses have not time to be warmed throughout, otherwise they think there could be no such thing as living: However, from what I felt of it, I believe they are mistaken. Indeed, had I been satisfied with the first blast, (which is generally the case with them) and never more ventured out in it, I certainly should have been of their opinion. They laughed at us for exposing ourselves so long to it; and were surprized that our curiosity should lead us to make experiments at the expence of our persons. They assure us, that during the time it lasts, there is not a mortal to be seen without doors, but those whom necessity obliges to it. All their doors and windows are shut close, to prevent the external air from entering; and where there are no window-shutters, they hang up wet blankets on the inside of the window.

The



The servants are constantly employed in sprinkling water through all their apartments, to preserve the air in as temperate a state as possible; and this is no difficult matter here, as I am told there is not a house in the city that has not a fountain within it. By these means, the people of fashion suffer very little from the Sirocco, except the strict confinement to which it obliges them.

It is somewhat singular, that notwithstanding the scorching heat of this wind, it has never been known to produce any epidemical distempers, or indeed bad consequences of any kind to the health of the people. It is true, they feel extremely weak and relaxed after it; but a few hours of the Tramontane, or North wind, which generally succeeds it, soon braces them up, and sets them to rights again. Now, in Naples, and in many other places in Italy, where its violence is not to be compared to this, it is often attended with putrid disorders, and seldom fails to produce almost a general dejection of spirits. It is true, indeed, that there the Sirocco lasts for many days, nay, even for weeks; so that, as its effects are different, it probably proceeds likewise from a different cause.

I have not been able to procure any good account of this very singular object in the climate of Palermo. The causes they assign for it are various, though none of them, I think, altogether satisfactory.

I have seen an old fellow here, who has wrote upon it. He says it is the same wind that is so dreadful in the sandy deserts of Africa, where it sometimes proves mortal in the space of half an hour. He alleges that it is cooled by its passage over the sea, which entirely disarms it of these tremendous effects, before it reaches Sicily. But if this was true, we should expect to find it most violent on that side of the island that lies nearest to Africa, which is not the case:—Though indeed it is possible, that its heat may be again increased by its passage across the island;

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island; for it has ever been found much more violent at Palermo, which is near the most northern point, than any where else in Sicily.—Indeed, I begin to be more reconciled to this reason, when I consider that this city is almost surrounded by very high mountains, the ravines and vallies betwixt which are entirely parched up and burning hot at this season. These likewise contain innumerable springs of warm water, the steams of which must tend greatly to increase the heat, and perhaps likewise to soften the air, and disarm it of its noxious qualities. It is a practice too, at this season, to burn heath and brushwood on the mountains, which must still add to the heat of the air.

Some gentlemen who were in the country told me, that they walked out immediately after the Sirocco, and found the grass and plants, that had been green the day before, were become quite brown, and crackled under their feet as if dried in an oven.

I shall add for your amusement, a journal of the weather since we came to Palermo. The barometer, has continued constantly within a line or two of the same point,  $29\frac{1}{2}$ —and the sky has been always clear, except the day of the Sirocco and the 26th of June, when we had a pretty smart shower of rain for two hours; so that I think I have nothing farther to do, but to mark the heights of the thermometer.

						Thermometer.
June	17	-	-	-	-	$73\frac{1}{2}$
	18	-	-	-	-	74
	19	-	-	-	-	75
	20	-	-	-	-	76
	21	-	-	-	-	$75\frac{1}{2}$
	22	-	-	-	-	77
	23	-	-	-	-	$76\frac{1}{2}$
	24	-	-	-	-	77
	25	-	-	-	-	77
	26	-	-	-	-	$77\frac{1}{2}$

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Thermometer.

	27	-	-	-	-	77
	28	-	-	-	-	$77\frac{1}{2}$
	29	-	-	-	-	$77\frac{3}{4}$
	30	-	-	-	-	$78\frac{1}{2}$
July	1	-	-	-	-	79
	2	-	-	-	-	80
	3	-	-	-	-	$80\frac{1}{2}$
	4	At our new lodgings on the sea-side, fronting the North,				74
	5	-	-	-	-	73
	6	-	-	-	-	$72\frac{1}{2}$
	7	-	-	-	-	$72\frac{1}{2}$
July	8	The Sirocco wind, In the afternoon,				112
	9	-	-	-	-	82
	10	-	-	-	-	79
		-	-	-	-	78

The more I consider the extreme violence of this heat, the more I am astonished that we were able to bear it with so little inconvenience. We did not even feel that depression of spirits that commonly attends very great heats with us.—The thermometer rose 40 degrees, or very near it;—and it happens singularly enough, that before the Sirocco came on, it stood just about 40 degrees above the point of congelation; so that in the morning of the 8th of July, the heat increased as much, almost instantaneously, as it generally does during the whole time that the sun moves from the equator to the tropic; for the difference betwixt 72 and 112 is the same as betwixt the freezing point and 72; or betwixt a cold day in winter, and a warm one in summer.

Yesterday we had a great entertainment in the palace of the Prince Partana; from the balcony of which the viceroy reviewed a regiment of Swiss, the best by much I have yet seen in the Neapolitan service. They are really a fine body of men, and, notwithstanding the violence of the heat, went through their



their motions with great spirit. They had two field-pieces on each flank, which were extremely well served; and the evolutions were performed with more precision and steadiness than one generally meets with, except in England or Germany. The grenadiers were furnished with false grenades, which produced every effect of real ones, except that of doing mischief. The throwing of these was the part of the entertainment that seemed to please the most; and the grenadiers took care to direct them so, that their effect should not be lost. When a number of them fell together amongst a thick crowd of the mobility, which was commonly the case, it afforded an entertaining scene enough, for they defended themselves with their hats, and threw them very dexterously upon their neighbours. However, we saw no damage done, except the singeing of a few wigs and caps; for the ladies were there in as great numbers as the gentlemen.

The company at the prince Partana's was extremely brilliant, and the entertainment very noble. It consisted principally of ices, creams, chocolate, sweetmeats, and fruit, of which there was a great variety. Not one half of the company play'd at cards; the rest amused themselves in conversation, and walking on the terrass. We found the young prince and princess, who are very amiable, with several of their companions, playing at cross-purposes, and other games of that kind. We were joyfully admitted of this chearful little circle, where we amused ourselves very well for several hours.—I only mention this, to shew you the different system of behaviour here and in Italy, where no such familiar intercourse is allowed amongst young people before marriage. The young ladies here are easy, affable, and unaffected; and not (as on the continent) perpetually stuck up by the sides of their mothers, who bring them into company, not for their amusement, but rather to offer them to sale; and seem mightily afraid lest every one should steal them,

them, or that they themselves should make an elopement; which indeed I should think there was some danger of, considering the restraint under which they are kept:—for surely there is no such strong incitement to vice, as the making a punishment of virtue.

Here the mothers shew a proper confidence in their daughters, and allow their real characters to form and to ripen. In the other case they have either no character at all, or an affected one, which they take care to throw off the moment they have got a husband; when they think it impossible to recede too far from these violent maxims of decorum and circumspection, the practice of which they had ever found so extremely disagreeable.

Were they allowed first to shew what they really are, I am sure they would not be half so bad; but their parents, by the manner they treat them, shew that they have no confidence in their principles; and seem to have adopted the ungenerous maxim of our countryman,

“ That every woman is at heart a rake.”

Now in countries where this maxim becomes of general belief, there is no doubt, that it likewise becomes true; for the women having no longer any character to support, they will even avoid the pretences to virtue, well knowing that these pretences are only looked upon as hypocrisy and affectation. I dare say, you will agree with me, that the better method to make them virtuous, is first to make them believe that we think them so; for where virtue is really esteemed, there are none that would willingly relinquish the character; but where it requires a guard, (as parson Adams says) it certainly is not worth the sentinel.

Some of the families here put me much in mind of our own domestic system at home. The prince of Resuttana, his wife and daughter, are always together; but it is because they chuse to be so, and there

appears the strongest affection, without the least diffidence on the one side, or restraint on the other.—The young princess Donna Rosolia, is one of the most amiable young ladies I have seen; she was of our little party last night, and indeed made one of its greatest ornaments.—It would appear vain and partial, after this to say, that in countenance, sentiment and behaviour, she seems altogether English;—but it is true:—and perhaps this may have contributed to advance her still higher in our esteem; for, in spite of all our philosophy, these unphilosophical prejudices will still exist, and no man, I believe, has entirely divested himself of them.—We had lately a very noble entertainment at her father's country house, and had reason to be much pleased with the unaffected hospitality and easy politeness of the whole family. This palace is reckoned the most magnificent in the neighbourhood of Palermo. It lies about six or seven miles to the west of the city, in the country called Il Colle; quite in the opposite direction from the Bagaria, which I have already mentioned to you. The viceroy and his family, with the greatest part of the nobility, were of this party, which lasted till about two in the morning. At midnight a curious set of fire-works were played off, from the leads of the palace, which had a very fine effect from the garden below.

Farewel.—I had no time to write to you yesterday, and tho' we did not break up till near three this morning, I have got up at eight, I was so eager to give you some account of the Sirocco wind.

We are now going to be very busy: The great feast of St. Rosolia begins to-morrow; and all the world are on the very tip-toe of expectation: perhaps they may be disappointed. I often wish that you were with us, particularly when we are happy: Though you know it is by no means feasts and shows that make us so. However, as this is perhaps the most remarkable one in Europe, that you may enjoy as much of it as possible,



possible, I shall sit down every night, and give you a short account of the transactions of the day.—We are now going to breakfast; after which we are engaged to play at Ballon, a game I suppose you are well acquainted with; but as the day promises to be extremely hot, I believe I shall desert the party and go a swimming.—But I see F. and G. have already attacked the figs and peaches, so I must appear for my interest.—Farewel,

Ever yours.

## LETTER XXVIII.

Palermo, July 12th.

**A**BOUT five in the afternoon, the festival began by the triumph of St. Rosalia, who was drawn with the utmost pomp through the centre of the city, from the Marino to the Porto Nuovo. The triumphal car was preceded by a troop of horse, with trumpets and kettle-drums, and all the city officers in their gala uniforms. It is indeed a most enormous machine: It measures seventy feet long, thirty wide, and upwards of eighty high, and, as it passed along, greatly over-topped the loftiest houses of Palermo. The form of its under part is like that of the Roman gallies, but it swells as it advances in height; and the front assumes an oval form like an amphitheatre, with seats placed in the theatrical manner. This is the great orchestra, and was filled with a very numerous band of musicians placed in rows, one above the other: Over this orchestra, and a little behind it, there is a large dome supported by six fine Corinthian columns, and adorned with a number of figures of saints and angels; and on the summit of the dome there is a gigantic silver statue of St. Rosalia.—The whole machine is dressed out with orange-trees, flower-pots,

and large trees of artificial coral. The car stopped every fifty or sixty yards, when the orchestra performed a piece of music, with songs in honour of the saint. It appeared a great moving castle, and completely filled up the street from side to side. This indeed was its greatest disadvantage, for the space it had to move in was in no wise proportioned to its size, and the houses seemed to dwindle away to nothing as it passed along. This vast fabric was drawn by fifty-six huge mules, in two rows, curiously caparisoned, and mounted by twenty-eight postillions, dressed in gold and silver stuffs, with great plumes of ostrich feathers in their hats.—Every window and balcony, on both sides of the street, were full of well-dressed people, and the car was followed by many thousands of the lower sort. The triumph was finished in about three hours; and was succeeded by the beautiful illumination of the Marino.

I believe I have already mentioned, that there is a range of arches and pyramids extended from one end to the other of this noble walk: these are painted, and adorned with artificial flowers, and are entirely covered over with small lamps, placed so very thick, that at a little distance the whole appears so many pyramids and arches of flame. The whole chain of this illumination was about a mile in length, and indeed you can hardly conceive any thing more beautiful. There was no break or imperfection any where; the night being so still that not a single lamp was extinguished.

Opposite to the centre of this great line of light, there was a magnificent pavilion erected for the viceroy and his company; which consisted of the whole nobility of Palermo. And on the front of this, at some little distance in the sea, stood the great fireworks, representing the front of a palace, adorned with columns, arches, trophies, and every ornament  
of

of architecture. All the chebecks, gallies, galliots, and other shipping, were ranged around this palace, and formed a kind of amphitheatre in the sea, inclosing it in the centre.—These began the show by a discharge of the whole of their artillery, the sound of which, re-echoed from the mountains, produced a very noble effect; they then played off a variety of water rockets, and bombs of a curious construction, that often burst below water. This continued for half an hour, when, in an instant, the whole of the palace was beautifully illuminated. This was the signal for the shipping to cease, and appeared indeed like a piece of enchantment, as it was done altogether instantaneously, and without the appearance of any visible agent. At the same time the fountains, that were represented in the court before the palace, began to spout up fire, and made a representation of some of the great *jet d'eau*s of Versailles and Marly.—As soon as these were extinguished, the court immediately assumed the form of a great parterre; adorned with a variety of palm-trees of fire, interspersed with orange-trees, flower-pots, vases, and other ornaments. On the extinguishing of these, the illumination of the palace was likewise extinguished; and the front of it broke out into the appearance of a variety of suns, stars, and wheels of fire, which in a short time reduced it to a perfect ruin.—And when all appeared finished, there burst from the centre of the pile, a vast explosion of two thousand rockets, bombs, serpents, squibs, and devils, which seemed to fill the whole atmosphere; the fall of these made terrible havoc amongst the clothes of the poor people who were not under cover, but afforded admirable entertainment to the nobility who were. During this exhibition we had a handsome entertainment of coffee, ices and sweet-meats, with a variety of excellent wines, in the great pavilion in the centre of the Marino; this was at the expence of the Duke of Castellano, the prætor



(or mayor) of the city.—The principal nobility give these entertainments by turns every night during the festival, and vie with each other in their magnificence.

So soon as the fireworks were finished, the viceroy went out to sea in a galley richly illuminated. We chose to stay on shore, to see the appearance it made at a distance. It was rowed by seventy-two oars, and indeed made one of the most beautiful objects you can imagine; flying with vast velocity over the waters, as smooth and as clear as glass, which shone round it like a flame, and reflected its splendor on all sides. The oars beat time to the French-horns, clarionets, and trumpets, of which there was a numerous band on the prow.

The day's entertainment was concluded by the Corso, which began exactly at midnight, and lasted till two in the morning.

The great street was illuminated in the same magnificent manner as the Marino. The arches and pyramids were erected at little distances from each other, on both sides of the street, exactly betwixt the footpath and the space for carriages; and when seen from either of the gates, appeared to be two continued lines of the brightest flame. Indeed, these illuminations are so extremely different, and so greatly superior, to any I have ever seen, that I find it difficult to give any tolerable idea of them.—Two lines of coaches occupied the entire space betwixt these two lines of illumination. They were in their greatest gala; and as they open from the middle, and let down on each side, the beauty of the ladies, the richness of their dress, and brilliance of their jewels, were displayed in the most advantageous manner.

This beautiful train moved slowly round and round for the space of two hours; and every member of it seemed animated with a desire to please.—The company appeared all joy and exultation:—Scarce two  
coaches

coaches passed without some mutual acknowledgment of affection or respect; and the pleasure that sparkled from every eye seemed to be reflected and communicated by a kind of sympathy through the whole.

In such an assembly, it was impossible for the heart not to dilate and expand itself;—I own mine was often so full, that I could hardly find utterance; and I have seen a tragedy with less emotion than I did this scene of joy.—I always thought these affections had been strangers to pomp and parade; but here the universal joy seemed really to spring from the heart: it brightened up every countenance, and spoke affection and friendship from every face.—No stately air,—no supercilious look;—all appeared friends and equals.—And sure I am, that the beauty of the ladies was not half so much heightened either by their dress or their jewels, as by that air of complacency and good humour with which it was animated.

We were distributed in different coaches amongst the nobility, which gave us a better opportunity of making these observations.—I will own to you, that I have never beheld a more delightful sight;—and if superstition often produces such effects, I sincerely wish we had a little more of it amongst us. I could have thrown myself down before St. Rosalia, and blessed her for making so many people happy.

We retired about two o'clock; but the variety of glittering scenes and gaudy objects still vibrated before my eyes, and prevented me from sleeping; however, I am almost as well refreshed as if I had:—but I really believe four more such days will be too much for any of us. Indeed, I am sure that it is impossible to keep it up, and it must necessarily flag. I think, from what I can observe, they have already exhausted almost one half of their preparations; how they are to support the other four days, I own, I do not comprehend;—however, we shall see.

I thought to have given you an account of every thing at night, after it was over, but I find it is impossible: the spirits are too much dissipated and exhausted, and the imagination is too full of objects to be able to separate them with any degree of regularity.—I shall write to you therefore regularly the morning following, when this fever of the fancy has had time to cool, and when things appear as they really are.—Adieu then till to-morrow.—Here is a fine shower, which will cool the air, and save the trouble of watering the Marino and the great street, which is done regularly every morning when there is no rain. The thermometer is at 73.

13th. I thought there would be a falling off.—Yesterday's entertainments were not so splendid as those of the day before. They began by the horse-races. There were three races, and six horses started each race. These were mounted by boys of about twelve years old, without either saddle or bridle, but only a small piece of cord, by way of bit, in the horse's mouth, which it seems is sufficient to stop them. The great street was the course; and to this end it was covered with earth to the depth of five or six inches.—The firing of a cannon at the Porto Felice was the signal for starting: and the horses seemed to understand this, for they all set off at once, full speed, and continued at their utmost stretch to the Porto Novo, which was the winning post. It is exactly a mile, and they performed it in a minute and thirty-five seconds, which, considering the size of the horses, (scarce fourteen hands) we thought was very great. These are generally Barbs, or a mixed breed, betwixt the Sicilian and Barb. The boys were gaudily dressed, and made a very pretty appearance.—We were surprized to see how well they stuck on:—Indeed, I observed they had generally laid fast hold of the mane.

The moment before starting, the street appeared crammed perfectly full of people; nor did we conceive



ceive how the race could possibly be performed. Our astonishment was increased when we saw the horses run full speed at the very thickest of this crowd, which did not begin to open, till they were almost close upon it.—The people then opened, and fell back on each side, by a regular uniform motion, from one end of the street to the other. This singular manœuvre seemed to be performed without any bustle or confusion, and the moment the horses were past, they closed again behind them. However, it destroys great part of the pleasure of the race: for you cannot help being under apprehensions for such a number of people, whom you every moment see in the most imminent danger of being trod to death; for this must inevitably be their fate, were they only a second or two later in retiring. These accidents, they allow, have often happened; however, yesterday every body escaped.

The victor was conducted along the street in triumph, with his prize displayed before him. This was a large piece of white silk embroidered and worked with gold.

These races I think are much superior to the common stile of races in Italy, which are performed by horses alone without riders; but they are by no means to be compared to those in England.

The great street was illuminated in the same manner as on the preceding night; and the grand conversation of the nobles was held at the archbishop's palace, which was richly fitted up for the occasion.

The gardens were finely illuminated; and put me a good deal in mind of our Vauxhall. There were two orchestras (one at each end) and two very good bands of music. The entertainment was really a splendid one, and the archbishop shewed attention and politeness to every person of the company.

About ten o'clock the great triumphal car marched back again in procession to the Marino. It was richly illuminated with large wax tapers, and made a most formidable

formidable figure.—Don Quixote would have been very excusable in taking it for an enchanted castle, moving through the air.—We did not leave the archbishop's till midnight, when the Corso began, which was precisely the same in every respect as the night before, and afforded us a most delightful scene.

14th. Last night the two great streets, and the four gates of the city that terminate them, were illuminated in the most splendid manner.—These streets cross each other exactly in the centre of the city, where they form a beautiful square, called *La Piazza Ottangolare*, from the eight angles they form. This square was richly ornamented with tapestry, statues, and artificial flowers; and as the buildings which form its four sides are all uniform, and of a beautiful architecture, and at the same time highly illuminated, it made a very fine appearance. There are four orchestras erected in it; and the four bands of music are greater than I had any conception this city could have produced.

From the centre of this square you have a view of the whole city of Palermo thus dressed out in its glory; and indeed, the effect it produces surpasses all belief. The four gates that form the vistas to this splendid scene are highly decorated, and lighted up in an elegant taste; the illuminations representing a variety of trophies, the arms of Spain, those of Naples, Sicily, and the city of Palermo, with their guardian geniuses, &c. &c.

The conversation of the nobles was held in the viceroy's palace; and the entertainment was still more magnificent than any of the former. The great fireworks opposite to the front of the palace began at ten o'clock, and ended at midnight; after which we went to the Corso, which lasted, as usual, till two in the morning. This part of the entertainment still pleases us the most; it is indeed the only part of it that reaches the heart; and where this is not the case, a puppet-

pet-show is just as good as a coronation.—We have now got acquainted almost with every countenance; and from that air of goodness and benignity that animates them, and which seems to be mutually reflected from one to the other, we are inclined to form the most favourable opinion of the people.

Our fire-works last night were much greater than those of the Marino, but their effect did not please me so much; the want of the sea and shipping were two capital wants. They likewise represented the front of a palace, but of a much greater extent. It was illuminated too as the former, and the whole conducted pretty much in the same manner. We saw it to the greatest advantage from the balconies of the state apartments, in the viceroy's palace, where we had an elegant concert; but, to the no small disappointment of the company, Gabrieli, the finest singer, but the most capricious mortal upon earth, did not chuse to perform.

15th. Three races, six horses each, as formerly. They called it very good sport.—I cannot say that I admired it.—A poor creature was rode down, and I believe killed; and one of the boys had likewise a fall.

The great assembly of the nobility was held at the Judice Monarchia's, an officer of very high trust and dignity. Here we had an entertainment in the same stile as the others, and a very good concert.—At eleven o'clock the viceroy, attended by the whole company, went on foot to visit the square and the great church.—We made a prodigious train; for though the city was all a lamp of light, the servants of the viceroy and nobility attended with large wax flambeaux, to shew us the way.

So soon as the viceroy arrived in the square, the four orchestras struck up a symphony, and continued playing till he left it.—The crowd around the great church was immense, and without the presence of the viceroy, it would have been impossible for us to get into  
it:



it: but his attendants soon cleared the passages, and at once entering the great gate, we beheld the most splendid scene in the world. The whole church appeared one flame of light; which, reflected from ten thousand bright and shining surfaces, of different colours and at different angles, produced an effect, that, I think, much exceeded all the descriptions of enchantment I have ever read. Indeed, I did not think that human art could have devised any thing so wonderfully magnificent.—I believe I have already mentioned that the whole church, walls, roof, pillars, and pilasters were entirely covered over with mirror, interspersed with gold and silver paper, artificial flowers, &c. done up with great taste and elegance, so that not one inch either of stone or plaister was to be seen.—Now, form an idea, if you can, of one of our great cathedrals dressed out in this manner, and illuminated with twenty thousand wax tapers, and you will have some faint notion of this splendid scene.—I own it did greatly exceed my expectations, although, from the descriptions we had of it, they were raised very high.—When we recovered from our first surprise, which had produced, unknown to ourselves, many exclamations of wonder and astonishment, I observed that all the eyes of the nobility were fixed upon us; and that they enjoyed exceedingly the amazement into which we were thrown.—Indeed this scene, in my opinion, still greatly exceeds all the rest of the show.

I have often heard the illumination of St. Peter's spoken of as a wonderful fine thing: so indeed it is; but it is certainly no more to be compared to this, than the planet Venus is to the sun.—The effects indeed are of a different kind, and cannot well be compared together.

This scene was too glaring to bear any considerable time; and the heat occasioned by the immense number of lights, soon became intolerable.—I attempted to reckon the number of lustres, and counted upwards  
of

of five hundred; but my head became giddy, and I was obliged to give it up.—They assure us that the number of wax tapers is not less than twenty thousand. There are eight and twenty altars, fourteen on each side; all these are dressed out with the utmost magnificence, and the great altar is still the most splendid of all.

When you think of the gaudy materials that compose the lining of this church, it will be difficult to annex an idea of grandeur and majesty to it: at least, so it struck me, when I was first told of it; yet I assure you, the elegant simplicity and unity of the design prevents this effect, and gives an air of dignity to the whole.

It is on this part of the show the people of Palermo value themselves the most; they talk of all the rest as trifling in comparison of this; and indeed, I think it is probable, that there is nothing of the kind in the world that is equal to it.—It is strange they should chuse to be at so vast an expence and trouble, for a shew of a few hours only; for they have already begun this morning to strip the church of its gaudy dress; and I am told it will not be finished for many weeks.

From the church we went immediately to the Corso, which concluded, as usual, the entertainments of the day.

16th. Last night we had the full illumination of all the streets.—The assembly was held at the prætor's, where there was an elegant entertainment and a concert.—Pacherotti, the first singer of the opera, distinguished himself very much. I think he is one of the most agreeable I have ever heard; and am sure, that in a few years, he will be very celebrated. Campanucci, the second soprano, is, I think, preferable to most that I have heard in Italy; and you will the more easily believe this, when I inform you, that he is engaged for next winter, to be the first singer in the great opera at Rome. Is it not strange, that the capital of all Italy;  
and

and for the fine arts, (as it formerly was for arms) the capital of the world, should thus condescend to chuse its first opera-performer from amongst the subalterns of a remote Sicilian stage?

You will believe, that with two such sopranos as these, and Gabrieli for the first woman, the opera here will not be a despicable one. It is to begin in a few days, notwithstanding the extreme heat of the season; so fond are the people here of these entertainments.

Their opera dancers are those you had last year at London: they are just arrived, and the people are by no means pleased with them. We saw them this morning at the rehearsal; and, to their great surprize addressed them in English. You cannot imagine how happy they were to see us.—Poor souls! I was delighted to hear with what warmth of gratitude and affection they spoke of England.—There is a mother and two daughters;—the youngest pretty, but the eldest, the first dancer, appears a sensible, modest, well-behaved girl;—much more so than is common with these sort of people. Speaking of England, she said, with a degree of warmth, that her good treatment in general could hardly inspire, that in her life she never left any country with so sore a heart; and had she only enjoyed her health, all the world should never have torn her away from it.—She seemed affected when she said this.—I acknowledged the honour she did the English nation; but alledged that these sentiments, and the manner in which they were uttered, could scarcely proceed from a *general love* of the country.—She answered me with a smile, but at the same time I could observe the tear in her eye.—At that instant we were interrupted; however, I shall endeavour, if possible, to learn her story; for I am persuaded there is one: perhaps you may know it, as I dare say it is no secret in London.

But I have got quite away from my subject, and had absolutely forgot that I sat down to give you an  
account



account of the feast.—Indeed, to tell you the truth, it is a kind of subject I by no means like to write upon;—I almost repent that I had undertaken it, and am heartily glad it is now over.—It does very well to see shows; but their description is of all things on earth the most insipid: for words and writing convey ideas only by a slow and regular kind of progress; and while we gain one, we generally lose another, so that the fancy seldom embraces the whole;—but when a thousand objects strike you at once, the imagination is filled and satisfied.

The great procession that closes the festival began at ten o'clock.---It only differed from other processions in this, that besides all the priests, friars, and religious orders of the city, there were placed at equal distances from one another ten lofty machines made of wood and pasteboard, ornamented in a most elegant manner, representing temples, tabernacles, and a variety of beautiful pieces of architecture.—These are furnished by the different convents and religious fraternities, who vie with each other in the richness and elegance of the work. Some of them are not less than sixty feet high.—They are filled with figures of saints and of angels, made of wax, so naturally and so admirably well painted, that many of them seemed really to be alive. All these figures are prepared by the nuns, and by them dressed out in the richest robes of gold and silver tissue.

We were a good deal amused this morning to see them returning home in coaches to their respective nunneries.—At first we really took them for ladies in their gala dress, going out to visit the churches, which we were told was the custom, and began to pull off our hats as they went past.—Indeed, we were led into this blunder by some of our friends, who carried us out on purpose; and as they saw the coaches approach told us, This is the Princess of such a thing,—there is the Dutchess of such another thing;—and, in short

we

we had made half a dozen of our best bows, (to the no small entertainment of these wags) before we discovered the trick.—They now insist upon it, that we are good Catholics, for we have been doing nothing all this morning but bowing to saints and angels.

A great silver box, containing the bones of St. Rosolia, closed the procession. It was carried by thirty-six of the most respectable burgesses of the city, who look upon this as the greatest honour. The archbishop walked behind it, giving his benediction to the people as he passed.

No sooner had the procession finished the tour of the great square, before the prætor's palace, than the magnificent fountain in the centre, one of the finest in Europe, was converted into a fountain of fire; throwing it up on all sides, and making a most beautiful appearance. It only lasted for a few minutes, and was extinguished by a vast explosion, which concluded the whole. As this was altogether unexpected, it produced a very fine effect, and surprized the spectators more than any of the great fireworks had done.

There was a mutual and friendly congratulation ran through the whole assembly, which soon after parted; and this morning every thing has once more reassumed its natural form and order;—and I assure you, we were not more happy at the opening of the festival, than we are now at its conclusion. Every body was fatigued and exhausted with the perpetual feasting, watching, and dissipation of these five days. However, upon the whole, we have been much delighted with it, and may with great truth pronounce, that the entertainments of the feast of St. Rosolia are infinitely beyond those of the Holy Week at Rome; of the Ascension, at Venice; or, indeed, any other festival that we have ever been witnesses of.

I believe I did not tell you, that about ten or twelve days ago, as the time we had appointed for our return

to Naples was elapsed, we had hired a small vessel, and provided every thing for our departure : we had even taken leave of the viceroy, and received our passports. Our baggage and sea-store was already on board, when we were set upon by our friends, and solicited with so much earnestness and cordiality, to give them another fortnight, that we found it absolutely impossible to refuse it ; and in consequence discharged our vessel, and sent for our trunks.—I should not have mentioned this, were it not to shew you how much more attention is paid to strangers here than in most places on the continent.

We reckon ourselves much indebted to them for having obliged us to prolong our stay ; as, independent of the amusements of the festival, we have met with so much hospitality and urbanity, that it is now with the most sincere regret we find ourselves obliged to leave them. Indeed, had we brought our clothes and books from Naples, it is hard to say how long we might have staid.

We have sent to engage a vessel, but probably shall not sail for five or six days. Adieu.

Ever yours.

## LETTER XXIX.

Palermo, July 19th.

**W**E have now had time to enquire a little into some of the antiquities of this island, and have found several people, particularly the prince of Torremuzzo, who have made this the great object of their study. However, I find we must wade through oceans of fiction, before we can arrive at any thing certain or satisfactory.

Most of the Sicilian authors agree in deriving their origin from Ham, or, as they call him, Cham, the



son of Noah, who, they pretend, is the same with Saturn. They tell you that he built a great city, which from him was named Camefena. There have been violent disputes about the situation of this city: —Beroso supposes it to have stood where Camarini was afterwards founded, and that this was only a corruption of its primitive name. But Guarneri, Carrera, and others, combat this opinion, and affirm, that Camefena stood near the foot of Ætna, betwixt Aci and Catania, almost opposite to these three rocks that still bear the name of the Cyclops.—Indeed Carrera makes mention of an inscription that he had seen in a ruin near Aci, supposed to have been the sepulchre of Acis, which he thinks puts this matter out of doubt. These are his words: “*Hæc est inscriptio vetustæ cujusdam tabellæ repertæ in pyramide sepulchri Acis, ex fragmentis vetustissimæ Chamefenæ, urbis hodie Acis, conditæ a Cham, gigantum principe, etiam nuncupato Saturno Chamefeno, in promontorio Xiphonio, ubi adhuc hodie visuntur solo æquata antiqua vestigia, et ruinæ dictæ urbis, et arcis in insula prope Scopulos Cyclopum, et retinet adhuc sincopatum nomen La Gazzena.*”

This same Cham, they tell you, was a very great great scoundrel, and that Esenus, which signified infamous, was added to his name, only to denote his character. Fazzello says, he married his own sister, who was called Rhea; that Ceres was the fruit of this marriage; that she did not inherit the vices of her father, but reigned over Sicily with great wisdom and moderation. That she taught her subjects the method of making bread and wine, the materials for which their island produced spontaneously in the greatest abundance. That her daughter Proserpine was of equal beauty and virtue with herself. That Orius kind of Epirus had demanded her in marriage, and on a refusal carried her off by force; which gave  
occasion

occasion to the wild imagination of Greece to invent the fable of the rape of Proserpine by Pluto king of Hell; this Orius being of a morose and gloomy disposition.

Ceres has ever been the favourite deity of the Sicilians. She chose her seat of empire in the very centre of the island, on the top of a high hill called Enna, where she founded the city of that name. It is still a considerable place, and is at present named Castragiovanni; but little or nothing of the ruins of Enna is now to be discovered.

Cicero gives a particular account of this place. He says, from its situation in the centre of the island, it was called Umbilicus Sicilæ, and describes it as one of the most beautiful and fertile spots in the world. The temple of Ceres at Enna was renowned all over the heathen world, and pilgrimages were made to it, as they are at present to Loretto. Fazello says, it was held in such veneration, that when the city was surprized and pillaged by the slaves and barbarians, they did not presume to touch this sacred temple, although it contained more riches than all the rest of the city besides. There is scarce any vestige of it remaining.

There have been violent disputes amongst the Sicilian authors, whether Proserpine was carried off near the city of Enna, or that of Ætna, which stood at the foot of that mountain, but it is of mighty little consequence; and more respect, I think, is to be paid to the sentiments of Cicero, who gives it in favour of Enna, than the whole of them. Diodorus too is of the same opinion, and his description of this place is almost in the very words as that of Cicero. They both paint it as a perfect paradise; abounding in beautiful groves, clear springs and rivulets, and like Ætna, covered over with a variety of flowers at all seasons of the year. To these authorities, if you please you may add

that of Milton, who compares it to paradise itself :

——Nor that fair field  
Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,  
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis  
Was gather'd.

If you want to have a fuller account of this place, you will find it in Cicero's pleadings against Verres, and in the fifth book of Diodorus.—I have conversed with several gentlemen who have been there : they assure me that it still answers in a great measure to the description these authors give of it.—Medals, I am told, are still found, with an elegant figure of Ceres, and an ear of wheat for the reverse ; but I have not been able to procure any of them.

There was another temple in Sicily not less celebrated than this one of Ceres.—It was dedicated to Venus Erecina, and, like the other too, was built on the summit of a very high mountain. The antient name of this mountain was Eryx, or as the Sicilians call it Erice ; but it is now called St. Juliano. Both mountain and temple are often mentioned by the Greek and Roman historians, and happily the Sicilian ones have no dispute about its situation or origin, which they make to be almost as antient as that of Ceres.—Diodorus says, that Dedalus after his flight from Crete, was hospitably received here, and by his wonderful skill in architecture added greatly to the beauty of this temple. He enriched it with many fine pieces of sculpture, but particularly with the figure of a ram of such exquisite workmanship, that it appeared to be alive. This, I think, is likewise mentioned by Cicero.

Eneas too, in his voyage from Troy to Italy, landed in this part of the island, and according to Diodorus and Thucydides made very rich presents to this temple ; but Virgil is not satisfied with this : he must raise  
the



the piety of his hero still higher, and, in opposition to all the historians, makes Eneas the founder of the temple \*. Its fame and glory continued to increase for many ages ; and it was still held in greater veneration by the Romans, than it had been by the Greeks. Fazzello says, and quotes the authority of Strabo, that seventeen cities of Sicily were laid under a very heavy tribute, in order to raise a sufficient revenue to support the dignity and enormous expences of this temple. Two hundred soldiers were appointed for its guard, and the number of its priests, priestesses, and ministers, male and female, were altogether incredible.

At certain seasons of the year, great numbers of pigeons, which were supposed to be the attendants of Venus, used to pass betwixt Africa and Italy ; and resting for some days on mount Eryx, and round this temple, it was then imagined by the people that the goddess herself was there in person ; and on these occasions, he says, they worshipped her with all their might.—Festivals were instituted in honour of the deity, and the most modest woman was only looked upon as a prude, that refused to comply with the rites. However, there was not many complaints of this kind ; and it has been alledged, that the ladies of Eryx were often seen looking out for the pigeons long before they arrived ; and that they used to scatter peas about the temple to make them stay as long as possible.

Venus was succeeded in her possessions of Eryx by St. Julian, who now gives his name both to the city and mountain ; and indeed he has a very good title, for when the place was closely besieged, the Sicilians tell you, he appeared on the walls armed cap-a-pie,

\* Tum vicina astris Erycino in vertice sedes  
Fundatur Veneri Idaliæ, tumuloque sacerdos  
Et lucus late sacer additur Anchisæo.

and frightened the enemy to such a degree, that they instantly took to their heels, and left him ever since in quiet possession of it.—It would have been long before Venus and her pigeons could have done as much for them.

Many medals are still found in the neighbourhood, but there is not the least vestige of this celebrated temple.—Some marbles with inscriptions and engravings, that have been found deep below ground, are almost the only remaining monuments of its existence. Suetonius says, that it had even fallen to ruins before the time of Tiberius; but as Venus was the favourite divinity of that emperor, he had ordered it to be magnificently repaired: however, it is somewhat difficult to reconcile this with Strabo's account; who tells us, that even before his time it had been totally abandoned; and indeed this seems most probable, as every vestige of it has now disappeared, which is not commonly the case with the great works of the age of Tiberius.

Eneas landed at the port of Drepanum, exactly at the foot of this mountain. Here he lost his father Anchises; in honour of whom, on his return from Carthage, about a year after, he celebrated the games that make so great a figure in the Eneid, which Virgil introduces with a good deal of address, as a compliment to the piety of Augustus, who had instituted games of the same kind in honour of Julius Cæsar, his father by adoption.

It is singular, that Virgil's account of this part of Sicily should be so extremely different from that of Homer, when there was so very short a space, only a few months, betwixt the times that their two heroes visited it.—Indeed, Virgil seems to have followed the historians, in his conduct of this part of his poem, more than the sentiments of Homer; who makes this very country where Eneas was so hospitably received, the habitation of Polyphemus and the Cyclops, where  
Uliſes

Ulysses lost so many of his companions, and made so very narrow an escape himself. The island of Licofia, where he moored his fleet, lay very near the port of Drepanum; and Homer describes the adventure of Polyphemus to have happened on the shore of Sicily, exactly opposite to that island. Virgil has taken the liberty entirely to change the scene of action, as he was better acquainted both with the geography and history of the country than Homer seems to have been; and, perhaps with a good deal of propriety, places it at the foot of mount Etna. I am afraid there is not so much propriety in his changing the action itself, and contradicting the account that Homer gives of it. For Ulysses says that Polyphemus devoured four of his companions; but that he, by his address, saved all the rest, and was himself the very last that escaped out of the cave. Now Virgil makes Ulysses to have told a lie; for he affirms that he left Achemenides behind him; and Achemenides too gives a very different account of this affair from Ulysses: he assures Eneas, that Polyphemus devoured only two of his companions; after which they put out his eye, (*acuto telo*) with a sharp weapon; which rather gives the idea of a spear or javelin, than that of a great beam of wood made red hot in the fire, as Homer describes it. But there are many such passages.—Pray don't you think they seem either to indicate a negligence in Virgil, or a want of deference for his master? neither of which, I believe, he has ever been accused of.

The Sicilian authors are by no means pleased with Virgil for making Eneas the founder of this temple of Venus Erecina. They will only allow that the colony which he was obliged to leave here, after the burning of his ships, did, in honour of his mother Venus, build the city of Erice around her temple: but they all insist upon it, that the temple was built by Eryx, or as they call him Erice, another son of



Venus, but much older than Eneas; the same that was found to be so equal a match for Hercules, but at last was killed by him, at a boxing match near the foot of this mountain. The spot where this is supposed to have happened, still retains the name of (*il campo di Hercole*) the field of Hercules. Through the whole fifth book of the Eneid, this Eryx is stiled the brother of Eneas; and, in his account of the games, Virgil introduces those very gauntlets with which he fought with Hercules, (*in hoc ipso littore*) in this very field. The sight of which, from their enormous size, astonishes the whole host, and frightens the champion Dares so much that he refuses to fight.

Adieu. We are to have the opera in two days; after which, I think, we shall soon take leave of Sicily.

Ever yours.

### L E T T E R XXX.

Palermo, July 21st.

**Y**ESTERDAY we walked up to the Monte Pellegrino to pay our respects to St. Rosalia, and thank her for the variety of entertainments she has afforded us. It is one of the most fatiguing expeditions I ever made in my life. The mountain is extremely high, and so uncommonly steep, that the road up to it is very properly termed *la Scala*, or the Stair: before the discovery of St. Rosalia, it was looked upon as almost inaccessible, but they have now at a vast expence cut out a noble road, over precipices that were almost perpendicular. We found the saint lying in her grotto, in the very same attitude in which she is said to have been discovered; her head reclining gently upon her hand, and a crucifix before her. This is a statue of the finest white marble,

marble, and of most exquisite workmanship. It is placed in the inner part of the cavern, on the very same spot where St. Rosolia expired. It is the figure of a lovely young girl of about fifteen, in an act of devotion. The artist has found means to throw something that is extremely touching into the countenance and air of this beautiful statue. I never in my life saw one that affected me so much, and am not surprised that it should have captivated the hearts of the people. It is covered with a robe of beaten gold, and is adorned with some valuable jewels. The cave is of a considerable extent, and extremely damp, so that the poor little saint must have had very cold uncomfortable quarters. They have built a church around it, appointed priests to watch over these precious relics, and receive the offerings of pilgrims that visit them.

An inscription, graved by the hand of St. Rosolia herself, was found in a cave in mount Quesquina, at a considerable distance from this mountain. It is said that she was disturbed in her retreat there, and had wandered from thence to mount Pelegrino, as a more retired and inaccessible place. I shall copy it exactly, as it is preserved in the poor little saint's own Latin.

EGO ROSOLIA  
SINIBALDI QUISQUI-  
NE ET ROSARUM  
DOMINI FILIA AMORE  
DEI MEI JESU  
CHRISTI  
IN HOC  
ANTRO HABITA-  
RI DECREVI.

After St. Rosolia was scared from the cave where this inscription was found, she was never more heard of, till her bones were found about five hundred years after in this spot.

The prospect from the top of mount Pelegrino is very beautiful and extensive. Most of the Lipari islands

islands are discovered in a very clear day, and likewise a large portion of mount *Ætna*, although at the distance of almost the whole length of Sicily. The *Bagaria* too, and the *Colle*, covered over with a great number of fine country houses and gardens, make a beautiful appearance. The city of Palermo stands within less than two miles of the foot of the mountain, and is seen to great advantage. Many people went to this mountain during the time of the great illumination, from whence they pretend it has a very fine effect; but this unfortunately we neglected.

Near the middle of the mountain, and, not far from its summit, there still appears some small remains of a celebrated fort or castle, the origin of which the Sicilian authors carry back to the time of the most remote antiquity. *Massa* says, it is supposed to have been built in the reign of Saturn immediately after the flood; for in the time of the earliest Carthaginian wars, it was already greatly respected on account of its venerable antiquity.—It was then a place of strength, and is often mentioned by the antient historians. *Diodorus* says, in his twenty-third book, that *Hamilcar* kept possession of it for three years, against all the power of the Romans; who, with an army of forty thousand men, attempted in vain to dislodge him.

The situation of Palermo is seen, I think, to more advantage from the *Monte Pelegrino* than from any where else. This beautiful city stands near the extremity of a kind of natural amphitheatre, formed by exceeding high and rocky mountains; but the country that lies betwixt the city and these mountains, is certainly one of the richest and most beautiful spots in the world. The whole appears a magnificent garden, filled with fruit trees of every species, and watered by clear fountains and rivulets, that form a variety of windings through this delightful plain.—From the singularity of this situation, as well as from  
the



the richness of the soil, Palermo has had a great many flattering epithets bestowed upon it; particularly by the poets, who have denominated it *Conca d'ora*, The Golden Shell, which is at once expressive both of its situation and richness. It has likewise been stiled *Aurea Valle*, *Hortus Siciliae*, &c.; and to include all these together, the lasting term of *Felix* has been added to its name, by which you will find it distinguished even in the maps.

Many of the etymologists alledge, that it is from the richness of this valley that it had its original name of *Panormus*, which, they say, in the old Greek language, signified All a garden: but others declare there is no occasion for straining significations, and assert, with more appearance of plausibility, that it was called *Pan-ormus*, from the size and conveniency of its harbours; one of which is recorded anciently to have run into the very centre of the city. And this is the account Diodorus gives of it: It was called *Panormus*, says he, because its harbour even penetrated to the very innermost parts of the city, *Panormus* in the Greek language signifying All a port. And Procopius, in his History of the Wars of the Goths, says, that even in the time of Belisarius, the port was so deep, that that general run his ships up to the very walls of the city, and gave the assault from them. It is not now so well intitled to this name as it was formerly. These harbours have been almost entirely destroyed and filled up; most probably I think by the violent torrents from the mountains that surround it, which are recorded sometimes to have laid waste great part of the city. —Fazzello speaks of an inundation of which he was an eye-witness, that came down from the mountains with such fury, that they thought the city would have been entirely swept away. He says, it burst down the wall near to the royal palace, and bore away every thing that opposed its passage; churches, convents, houses, to the number of two thousand,

thousand, and drowned upwards of three thousand people.—Now the fragments and ruins carried to the sea by such a torrent alone would be sufficient to fill up a little harbour; so that we are not to be astonished, that these large capacious ports, for which it had been so much celebrated, no longer exist.

Next to Chamefena, Palermo is generally supposed to be the most ancient city in the island. Indeed, there still remain some monuments here, that carry back its origin to the times of the most remote antiquity. A bishop of Lucera has wrote on this subject. He is clearly of opinion, that Palermo was founded in the days of the first patriarchs. You will laugh at this;—so did I;—but the bishop does not go to work upon conjecture only: he supports his opinion with such proofs as, I own to you, at last a good deal staggered me. A Chaldean inscription was discovered here about six hundred years ago, on a block of white marble; it was in the reign of William II. who ordered it to be translated into Latin and Italian. The bishop says, there are many fragments about Palermo with broken inscriptions in this language; and seems to think it beyond a doubt, that the city was founded by the Chaldeans, in the very early ages of the world. This is the literal translation:—“During the time that Isaac, the son of Abraham, reigned in the valley of Damascus, and Esau, the son of Isaac, in Idumea, a great multitude of Hebrews, accompanied by many of the people of Damascus, and many Phenicians, coming into this triangular island, took up their habitation in this most beautiful place, to which they gave the name of Panormus.”

The bishop translates another Chaldean inscription, which is indeed a great curiosity. It is still preserved, though not with that care that so valuable a monument of antiquity deserves. It is placed over one of the old gates of the city, and when that gate falls

to ruin, it will probably be for ever lost. The translation is in Latin, but I shall give it you in English :

“ There is no other God but one God. There is  
 “ no other power but this same God. There is no  
 “ other conqueror but this God whom we adore.  
 “ The commander of this tower is Saphu, the son  
 “ of Eliphar, son of Esau, brother of Jacob, son  
 “ of Isaac, son of Abraham. The name of the  
 “ tower is Baych, and the name of the neighbouring  
 “ tower is Pharat.”

These two inscriptions seem to reflect a mutual light upon each other. Fazzello has preserved them both, and remarks upon this last, that it appears evidently from it, that the tower of Baych was built antecedent to the time of Saphu, (or, as we translate it, Zephu) who is only mentioned as commander of the tower, but not as its founder.

Part of the ruins of this tower still remain, and many more Chaldean inscriptions have been found amongst them, but so broken and mangled, that little could be made of them. Fazzello is in great indignation at some masons he found demolishing these precious relics, and complains bitterly of it to the senate, whom he with great justice upbraids for their negligence and indifference.

Conversing on this subject t'other night with a gentleman, who is extremely well versed in the antiquities of this place, I took the liberty of objecting to the Greek etymology, Pan-ormus, it appearing extremely absurd to give a Greek name to the city long before the existence of the Greek nation ; and that I was a good deal surprized Fazzello had not attempted to account for their seeming absurdity. He allowed the apparent validity of the objection, and blamed Fazzello for his negligence ; but assured me, that Pan-ormus, or something very nearly of the same sound, signified in the Chaldean language, and likewise in the Hebrew, a paradise, or delicious garden ;  
 and



and that the Greeks probably finding it so applicable, never thought of changing its name. This I was in no capacity to contradict.—He added too, that Panormus was likewise an Arabic word, and signified *This water*; which probably was the reason that the Saracens did not change its name, as they have done that of almost every thing else; as this is as applicable and as expressive of the situation of Palermo, as any of the other etymologies; it being surrounded on all sides with beautiful fountains of the purest water, the natural consequence of the vicinity of the mountains.

Pray shew this letter to our friend Mr. Crofts, and desire his sentiments on these etymologies and antiquities. Tell him I have not forgot his commission, and shall procure him all the oldest and most unintelligible books in Palermo; but I must beg, for the repose and tranquillity of mankind, that he will not republish them. On these conditions, I send him a most valuable fragment: it is part of a Chaldean inscription that has been exactly copied from a block of white marble, found in the ruins of the tower Baych.—I own I should like much to see it translated: the people here have as yet made nothing of it; and we were in no capacity to assist them.

[illegible]



On consulting the Bible, I find, that in our translation, this son of Esau is called Eliphaz, and Eliphaz' son, who was captain of this tower, Zepho. The variation of the names you see is but very trifling. It is not improbable that the other tower, Pharat, by a small variation of the same kind, has been named from their cousin, Pharez, the son of Judah, who got the start of his brother Zarah. You will find the story at the end of the thirty-eighth chapter of Genesis. The thirty-seventh chapter will give you some account of Eliphar and Saphu: but I can find no etymology for the name of the tower Baych. I dare say Mr. Crofts can tell you what it means.— Pharez signifies a breach; a very inauspicious name one would think for a tower. Adieu. The weather has become exceeding hot. The thermometer is at 80.

Ever yours.

LETTER



## LETTER XXXI.

Palermo, July 24th.

**I**N the course of our acquaintance with some gentlemen of sense and observation in this place, we have learned many things concerning the island, that perhaps may be worthy of your attention; and as this day is so hot that I cannot go out, I shall endeavour to recollect some of them, both for your amusement and my own. The thermometer is up at  $81\frac{1}{2}$ .—So you may judge of the situation of our northern constitutions.

There is one thing, however, that I have always observed in these southern climates; that although the degree of heat is much greater than with us, yet it is not commonly attended with that weight and oppression of spirits that generally accompany our sultry days in summer.—I am sure, that in such a day as this, in England, we should be panting for breath, and no mortal would think either of reading or writing.—That is not the case here; I never was in better spirits in my life: Indeed I believe the great quantities of ice we eat may contribute a good deal towards it; for I find, that in a very violent heat, there is no such cordial to the spirits as ice, or a draught of ice water: it is not only from the cold it communicates, but, like the cold bath, from the suddenness of that communication, it braces the stomach, and gives a new tone to the whole fibres.—It is amazing that this piece of luxury, in my opinion the greatest of all, and perhaps the only healthy one, should still be so much neglected with us.

I knew an English lady at Nice, who in a short time was cured of a very threatening consumption, only by a free indulgence in the use of ices; and I am fully persuaded, that in skilful hands, few reme-

dies would be more effectual in many of our stomach and inflammatory complaints, as hardly any thing has a stronger or more immediate effect upon the whole frame; and surely our administering of warm drinks and potions in these complaints tend often to nourish the disease.—It is the common practice here, in the most violent inflammatory fevers, to give large quantities of ice-water to drink; nay so far have they carried it, that Dr. Sanghes, a celebrated Sicilian physician, often covered over the breast and belly of his patients with snow or ice; and they assure us, in many cases, with great success.—But, indeed, I ought in justice to add, that this physician's practice has not been generally adopted.

Perhaps it is from the present benefit I find from ice, that I have said so much in favour of it; for I am fully persuaded, that if I had not a quantity of it standing here below the table, I should very soon be obliged to give up writing, and go to bed; but whenever I begin to flag, another glass is sure to set me all to rights again.

I was going to give you some account of the fisheries of this island.

The catching the tunny-fish constitutes one of the principal Sicilian amusements during the summer months; and the curing and sending them to foreign markets makes one of the greatest branches of their commerce.—We were invited yesterday by the Prince Sperlinga to a party of tunny-fishing; but the violence of the heat prevented it.

These fish do not make their appearance in the Sicilian seas till towards the latter end of May; at which time, the *Tonnaros*, as they call them, are prepared for their reception. This is a kind of aquatic castle, formed, at a great expence, of strong nets, fastened to the bottom of the sea by anchors and heavy leaden weights.

These tonnaros are always erected in the passages amongst the rocks and islands that are most frequented

quented by the tunny-fish. They take care to shut up with nets the entry into these passages, all but one little opening, which is called the outward gate of the tonnaro. This leads into the first apartment, or, as they call it, the hall. So soon as the fish have got into the hall, the fishermen, who stand sentry in their boats during the season, shut the outer door, which is no more than letting down a small piece of net, which effectually prevents the tunny from returning by the way they came. They then open the inner door of the hall, which leads to the second apartment, which they call the antichamber, and, by making a noise on the surface of the water, they soon drive the tunny-fish into it. So soon as the whole have got into the anti-chamber, the inner door of the hall is again shut, and the outer door is opened for the reception of more company.

Some tonnaros have a great number of apartments, with different names to them all; the saloon, the parlour, the dining-room, &c. but the last apartment is always stiled *la Camera della Morte*, The chamber of Death: this is composed of stronger nets and heavier anchors than the others.

So soon as they have collected a sufficient number of tunny-fish, they are driven from all the other apartments into the chamber of death, when the slaughter begins. The fishermen, and oftentimes the gentlemen too, armed with a kind of spear or harpoon, attack the poor defenceless animals on all sides, which now giving themselves up to despair, dash about with great force and agility, throwing the water over all the boats, and tearing the nets to pieces, they often knock out their brains against the rocks or anchors, and sometimes even against the boats of their enemies.

You see there is nothing very generous or manly in this sport.—The taking of the *Pesce Spada*, or sword-fish, is a much more noble diversion: no art



is made use of to ensnare him ; but with a small harpoon, fixed to a long line, they attack him in the open seas, and will often strike him at a very considerable distance. It is exactly the whale-fishing in miniature. The Sicilian fishermen (who are abundantly superstitious) have a Greek sentence which they make use of as a charm to bring him near their boats. This is the only bait they use, and they pretend that it is of wonderful efficacy, and absolutely obliges him to follow them ; but if unfortunately he should overhear them speak a word of Italian, he dashes under water immediately, and will appear no more.

As these fish are commonly of a great size and strength, they will sometimes run for hours after they are struck, and afford excellent sport.—I have seen them with a sword four or five feet long, and extremely sharp, which gives them a very formidable appearance in the water, particularly after they are wounded. The flesh of these animals is excellent ; it is more like beef than fish, and the common way of dressing it is in steaks.

The fishing of the *pesce spada* is most considerable in the sea of Messina, where they have likewise the greatest quantities of eels, particularly the *Morena*, so much esteemed among the Romans, which I think is indeed the finest fish I ever eat.

But it is not only their large fish that they strike with harpoons ; they have the same method of taking mullet, dories, a kind of mackarel, and many other species ; but this is always performed in the night.

So soon as it is dark, two men get into a small boat ; one of them holds a lighted torch over the surface of the water, the other stands with his harpoon ready poised in his hand. The light of the torch soon brings the fish to the surface, when the harpooner immediately strikes them. I have seen great quantities killed in this manner, both here and at Naples. A large fleet of boats employed in this kind of fishing make a  
beautiful

beautiful appearance on the water, in a fine summer night.

The coral fishery is chiefly practised at Trapani : they have invented a machine there, which answers the purpose vastly beyond their expectations. This is only a great cross of wood, to the centre of which is fixed a very heavy hard stone, capable of carrying the cross to the bottom. Pieces of small net are fixed to each limb of the cross, which is poised horizontally by a rope, and let down into the water. So soon as they feel it touch the bottom, the rope is made fast to the boat. They then row about, all over the coral beds : The consequence of which is, the great stone breaks off the coral from the rocks, and it is immediately entangled in the nets.—Since this invention the coral fishery has turned out to considerable account.

The people of Trapani are esteemed the most ingenious of the island ; they are the authors of many useful and ornamental inventions. An artist there, has lately discovered a method of making Cameios, which are a perfect imitation of the antient ones engraved on the onyx. They are done on a kind of hard shell from pastes of the best antiques, and so admirably executed, that it is often difficult to distinguish the antient from the modern. These set in gold, are generally worn as bracelets, and are at present in very high estimation amongst the ladies of quality here. Mrs Hamilton (now Lady Hamilton) procured a pair of them last year, and carried them with her to Naples, where they have been greatly admired. Commissions were immediately sent over, and the man has now more business than he can possibly manage ; however, we have been fortunate enough to procure a few pairs of them for our friends. I have seen cameios that have cost two hundred guineas, that could scarce be distinguished from one of these.

The difficulties under which the poor Sicilians labour, from the extreme oppression of their govern-

ment, obliges them sometimes to invent branches of commerce, that nature seems to have denied them, as they are not allowed to enjoy those she has bestowed.—The sugar-cane was formerly very much cultivated in this island, but the duties imposed were so enormous, that it has been almost totally abandoned.—But their crops of wheat alone, were they under a free government, would soon be sufficient to render this little nation one of the richest and most flourishing in the world; for even in the wretched state of cultivation it is in at present, one good crop, I am told, is sufficient to maintain the island for seven years.

You will be a good deal surprized, after this, to hear that the exportation of this commodity has been absolutely prohibited for these several years past; at least to all such as are not able to pay most exorbitantly for that privilege. The consequence is, that corn has become a perfect drug. The common price of the *salma*, which is two loads, was about thirty-one shillings; at present it is reduced to five shillings and six-pence, and there is a probability that it will still fall lower.

This crop, which has been very abundant, I am told, in many places they have hardly been at the pains to gather in, as there is little probability of this cruel prohibition being removed. The farmers are already ruined, and the ruin of their masters must inevitably follow. This is the method the ministry of Naples, or rather that of Spain, has taken to humble the pride of the Sicilian barons, whose power they pretend is still very extensive, and their jurisdiction absolute, most of them possessing a right of life and death in their own domain.—However, there is a probability that they will soon be obliged to relinquish their privileges.—The complaint is very universal, and if the ministry persevere in these rigorous measures, there must either be a revolt, or they must soon be reduced to a state of poverty as well as servitude.

I be-



I believe indeed most of them would readily embrace any plausible scheme, to shake off their yoke; as in general they appear to be people of great sensibility, with high notions of honour and liberty.

Talking of the natural riches of their island,—Yes, say they, if these were displayed, you would have reason indeed to speak of them. Take a look of these mountains,—they contain rich veins of every metal, and many of the Roman mines still remain;—but to what end should we explore them?—It is not we that should reap the profit.—Nay, a discovery of any thing very rich might possibly prove the ruin of its possessor.—No, in our present situation the hidden treasures of the island must ever remain a profound secret.—Were we happy enough to enjoy the blessings of your constitution, you might call us rich indeed.—Many hidden doors of opulence would then be opened, which now are not even thought of, and we should soon re-assume our antient name and consequence; but at present we are nothing.

This is the language that some of the first people amongst them hold with us. However, they still boast that they retain more of the feudal government than any nation in Europe. The shadow indeed remains, but the substance is gone long ago.—It has long been the object of the Bourbon ministry to reduce the power of the barons in every kingdom. Richlieu began the system in France, and it has ever since been prosecuted by his successors; its influence has now spread over the whole of their possessions in Europe; of which, as this is the most remote, it has likewise been the longest in reaching it.

The foundation of the feudal system was first laid here by the count Rugeiro, about the middle of the eleventh century, immediately after he had driven the Saracens out of the island. He divided Sicily into three parts; the first, by consent of his army, was

given to the church ; the second he bestowed upon his officers, and the third he reserved for himself.

Of these three branches, or as they call them *Braccios*, (arms) he composed his parliament, the form of which remains exactly the same to this day. The *Braccio Militare* is composed of all the barons of the kingdom, to the number of two hundred and fifty-one, who are still obliged to military service : their chief is the prince Butero, who is hereditary president of the parliament ; for in conformity to the genius of the feudal government, some of the great offices are still hereditary. The three archbishops, all the bishops, abbies, priors, and dignified clergy, amounting to near seventy, form the *Braccio Ecclesiastico* : The archbishop of Palermo is their chief. The *Braccio Demaniale* is formed by election, like our house of commons : there are forty-three royal cities, stiled *Demaniale*, that have a right to elect members. Every householder had a vote in this election. Their chief is the member for Palermo, who is likewise prætor (or mayor of the city). He is an officer of the highest rank, and his power is very extensive ; inferior only to that of the viceroy ; in whose absence, the greatest part of the authority devolves upon him. He has a company of grenadiers for his body guards, and receives the title of excellency.

The prætor, together with six senators, who are stiled patricians, have the entire management of the civil government of the city. He is appointed every year, by the king, or by the viceroy, which is the same thing ; for I don't find that the people any longer exercise even the form of giving their votes. So that the very shadow of liberty has now disappeared as well as the substance.—You may judge of the situation of liberty in a kingdom, where all courts civil and criminal are appointed by regal authority, and where all offices are conferred only by the will of the sovereign, and depend entirely upon his caprice.

I own

I own I feel most sincerely for the Sicilians, who, I think, are possessed of many admirable qualities. But the spirit of every nation must infallibly sink, under an oppressive and tyrannical government.—Their spirit however has in a great measure kept them free from one branch of tyranny, the most dreadful of all, that of the inquisition. The kings of Spain wanted to establish it in its full force; but the barons, accustomed to exercise despotic government themselves, could not bear the thoughts of becoming slaves to a set of blind and ignorant Spanish priests, and, I believe, they took the only way that was left to avoid it. Every inquisitor that pretended to more zeal than they thought became him, was immediately assassinated; particularly if he presumed to interfere with the conduct or sentiments of the nobility. This soon took off the edge of their zeal, and reduced the holy office to a becoming moderation. However, they are extremely circumspect in their conversation about religious matters, and generally advise strangers to be on their guard, as the power of the inquisition, although considerably reduced, is by no means annihilated.

The laws of Sicily are scattered in a great number of volumes; these the king of Sardinia intended to abridge, and collect into one code, but unfortunately he was not long enough in possession of the island to accomplish this useful work.—But where there is an authority above all laws, laws can be but of little service.

The power of the viceroy is extremely absolute; he has not only the entire command of all the military force in the kingdom, but likewise presides with unbounded authority in all civil tribunals; and as he is also invested with the legantine power, his sway is equally great in religious matters.

He has the right of nominating to all the great offices in the kingdom, and confirming of all dignities, both civil and ecclesiastical.

In visiting the prisons, a ceremony which he performs with great pomp twice a year, he has the power  
of



of setting at liberty whatever prisoners he pleases, of reducing or altering their sentences, their crimes and accusations having first been read over to him.—Indeed, that there may be some appearance of a regard to law and justice, his counsellor always attends him on these occasions, to mark out the limits of the law.—This is an officer of very high rank, appointed to assist the viceroy in his decisions, where the case may appear intricate or dubious, and always is, or ought to be, one of the ablest lawyers in the island. Indeed, for the most part, this office has been given to strangers, who are supposed not to have any kindred or particular connections here, that in giving their judgment they may be free from all prejudice and partiality. He has free admittance into all courts and tribunals, that he may be the better enabled to give the viceroy an account of their proceedings.

The whole military force of Sicily, amounts at present, from what I can learn, to 9500 men, about 1200 of which are cavalry. Many of their cities and fortresses would require a very numerous garrison to defend them: particularly Messina, Syracuse, and Palermo: but indeed the state of their fortifications, as well as that of their artillery, is such, that (even if they were inclined) they could make but a very small defence.

If this island was in the hands of a naval power, I think it is evident, that it must command the whole Levant trade:—there are several little ports at each end of it, besides the great ones of Trapani, Syracuse, and Messina, which lie pretty near the three angles of the triangle. Whatever ships had passed either of these, the others could be advertised of in the space of half an hour, by means of signal towers, which the Sicilians have erected all around their island to warn them against sudden invasions from the Barbary side. These towers are built on every little promontory, within sight of each other. Fires are always kept ready  
for

for lighting, and a person is appointed to watch at each of them, so that the whole island can be alarmed, they assure us, in the space of an hour.

By the bye, we have been witnesses here of a practice, that appears to be a very iniquitous one, and in the end, I should think, must prove the destruction of our Mediterranean trade. Several ships have put in at this port with English colours, but to our surprise, not one Englishman on board. These, I find, they call *Bandiere men*;—perhaps it is a known practice, although, I own, I was an utter stranger to it. They are extremely numerous in these seas, and carry on a very considerable trade through the whole of the Mediterranean, to the great detriment of our own ships. Most of them belong to Genoa and Sicily, though they pass under the name of *Minorquins*. They purchase Mediterranean passports, I am told, from some of the governors of our garrisons, which entitles them during the term specified in these passports, to trade under English colours. I am assured that the number of these *Bandiere men* amounts to some hundreds. They have often one or two English sailors on board, or at least some person that speaks the language, to answer when they are challenged. Pray can you tell me if this practice is known in England?

Adieu. The heat has become absolutely intolerable. and I am able to write no more;—however, I should not have given it up yet, but my ice is all melted, and I have not the conscience to send out the servant for more: I dare say, you are very glad of it, and wish it had been melted long ago. If this continues, I believe we ourselves shall be melted. The thermometer is above eighty-two, and the heat still seems to increase.—The sea has even become too hot for bathing, and it does not at all refresh us now as it did formerly.

Farewel.

L E T.

## LETTER XXXII.

Palermo, July 26th.

**W**E have now got every thing ready for our departure, and if the wind continues favourable, this is probably the last letter I shall write to you from Sicily. However, I had still a great deal more to say, both of the Sicilians and their island, and shall leave them, I assure you, with a good deal of regret.

Two chebecks sailed this morning for Naples. We had the offer of a passage; but had already engaged a little vessel for ourselves.—A young nobleman, the marquis of —, was shipped off in one of them, with orders never more to set his foot in Palermo. Indeed we are much surpris'd that his sentence is so gentle, as he has been guilty of a crime which in catholic countries is generally punished with the utmost severity;—no less than the debauching a nun.—He met with the young lady at a bathing place, about thirty miles from this, where she had been sent from her convent for the recovery of her health; her mother was along with her, but as the two young people were first cousins, and had lived together like brother and sister, the old lady thought there could be no risk in allowing them their wonted familiarity.

The nun soon recovered her health, grew fat, and returned to her convent. This is about six or seven months ago; and it is only a few days since the fatal discovery was made; but alas! it would conceal no longer. He is banished Sicily for life; and his estate, or the greatest part of it, is confiscated. He may think himself happy they have treated him with so much lenity.—Had his jury been composed of priests and confessors, he must have died, without benefit of clergy; for this is the first mortal sin, for which there

is



is neither atonement nor absolution;— “to lie with a nun, and yet not be in orders.”

The punishment of the poor unfortunate girl will not be determined till after her delivery; however I am told, it will be a terrible one:—probably confinement in a dungeon for seven or eight years, without any company but a skull and a crucifix; and to live all that time upon bread and water. I saw a nun, at Portallegre, in Portugal, that had suffered this very punishment for the same crime.

This story has been kept a profound secret, and if we had not been on a very intimate footing with some people here we never should have heard of it.

As the Sicilians still retain some of the Spanish customs, though nothing of their gravity nor taciturnity, the younger sons of the nobility are stiled Don by their christened names, and the daughters Donna, like our appellation of lord and lady to the sons and daughters of Dukes. The eldest son has commonly the title of count or marquis, but they are not all counts as in France and Germany, where I have seen six counts in one house, and very near twice the number of barons in another.

One of the commonest titles here, as well as at Naples, is that of prince; and although these were only created by Philip II. of Spain, they take rank of all the other nobility, some of whom, particularly the counts, carry their origin as far back as the time of the Normans, and look with great contempt on these upstart princes. The dukes and marquises are not so old; the first were created by Charles V. and the second, though an inferior title, by King Alphonso, in the fifteenth century.—So that the dignity of the Sicilian titles may be said to be in the inverse ratio of their antiquities.

The luxury of the people here, like that of the Neapolitans, consists chiefly in their equipages and horses;

horses; but by a wise law of the King of Sardinia, which I am amazed should still remain in force, the viceroy alone is allowed to drive in the city with six horses; the prætor, the archbishop, and president of the parliament with four, all the rest of the nobility are restricted to two. But this is only within the gates of Palermo; and when they go to the country, there is none of them that drive with less than four: besides, every family of distinction has at least two or three carriages in daily use; for no man of fashion is so unpolite as to refuse his wife a chariot of her own, of which she has the entire command; (without this the Marino could never subsist) and the upper servants of the first families would be just as much ashamed to be seen on foot as their masters.—We took the liberty to ridicule the folly of this practice: they allow of its absurdity, and wish it could be broke through; but who is to lead the way? We even prevailed with some of the young nobility, which I assure you was no small condescension, to walk the streets with us during the illuminations; but even this condescension shewed the folly of the prejudice in a much stronger light than if they had refused us; for they would not be prevailed on to stir out, till they had sent their servants about ten yards before them, with large wax flambeaux, although the whole city was in a flame of light. You may believe we did not spare them upon this occasion; but it was all to no purpose. However, it is possible that we may overlook many customs of our own, that are not less ridiculous; for ridicule for the most part is relative, and depends only on time and place.—Perhaps you may remember the Prince of Anamaboo;—I should like to hear the account he would give of the English nation in his own country; for some of our customs struck him in a still more ridiculous light.—One afternoon, walking out in St. James's Park, he observed one of his acquaintance driving in a phaeton

a phaeton with four horses. The Prince burst into a violent fit of laughing :—when they asked him what was the matter ?—“ Vat the devil, (said the Prince, “ in his bad English) has that fellow eat so much at “ dinner that now it takes four horses to carry him ?— “ I rode out with him this morning, and he was then “ so light, that van little horse ran away with him.— “ He must either be a great fool or a great glutton.”— Another time they insisted on the Prince going to the play.—He went ; but he soon tired of it, and returned to his companions.—“ Well, Prince, (said they) “ what did you see ?”—Vat did I see, (replied he with “ the utmost contempt) I did see some men playing de “ fiddle—and some men playing de fool.”

I only infer from this, that it is with some degree of caution we should ridicule the customs of other nations : a Sicilian, perhaps, would laugh with as great justice at many of our customs ;—that, for instance, of obliging people to drink when they have no inclination to it ;—that in the North, of eating Soland Geese before dinner, to give them an appetite ;—that of physicians and lawyers wearing enormous wigs, and many others that will naturally occur to you, none of which appear in the least ridiculous to the people that practice them, who would no doubt defend them as strenuously as the Sicilians do the necessity of carrying flambeaux before them during the great illumination.—Indeed, they have just now given us an admirable specimen of some of our ridicules, in one of their opera-dances, with which we have been a good deal entertained.

I believe I told you that the dancers are lately come from England : they have brought upon the stage many of the capital London characters :—The bucks, the macaronies, the prigs, the cits, and some others still more respectable : these are tolerably well supported, and afford a good deal of laughing. But I am interrupted



interrupted, otherwise I should have given you a more particular account of them. Adieu. The heat is still intolerable, and there is no possibility of walking out.—We complain without reason of our own climate; and King Charles's observation I am persuaded was just; "That there is hardly any climate, where, throughout the year, we can have so much exercise in the open air." Ever yours.

## L E T T E R XXXIII.

Palermo, July 27th.

**T**HE Sicilians are extremely animated in conversation; and their action for the most part is so just and so expressive of their sentiments, that even without hearing what is said, one may easily comprehend the subject of their discourse. We used to think the French and Neapolitans were great adepts in this art; but they are vastly outdone by the Sicilians, both in the variety and justness of their gesticulation.

The origin of this custom they carry so far back as the time of the earliest tyrants of Syracuse, who, to prevent conspiracies, had forbid their subjects, under the most severe penalties, to be seen in parties talking together. This obliged them to invent a method of communicating their sentiments by dumb shew, which they pretend has been transmitted from generation to generation ever since.

I think it is not at all improbable that this custom too may have given the first idea of comedy; as we find, that some short time after, Epicarmus, a native of that city, was the author of this invention.

The Sicilians till lately retained a great many very foolish and superstitious customs; but most particularly in their marriage and funeral ceremonies: it would be tedious to give you an account of all these; many of them are still practised in the wild and mountainous parts

parts of the island.—So soon as the marriage ceremony is performed, two of the attendants are ready to cram a great spoonful of honey into the mouths of the bride and bridegroom, pronouncing it emblematical of their love and union, which they hope will ever continue as sweet to their souls, as that honey is to their palates.—They then begin to throw handfuls of wheat upon them, which is continued all the way to the house of the bridegroom. This is probably the remains of some antient rite to Ceres, their favourite divinity, and they think it cannot fail of procuring them a numerous progeny :—However, the Sicilian women have no occasion for any charm to promote this, as, in general, they are abundantly prolific even without it. Fazzello gives an account of women having frequently upwards of forty children; and Carrera mentions one who had forty-seven.

The young couple are not allowed to taste of the marriage-feast; this they pretend is to teach them patience and temperance; but when the dinner is almost finished, a great bone is presented to the bridegroom by the bride's father, or one of her nearest relations, who pronounces these words, "*Rodi tu quest'osso, &c.*" "Pick you this bone; for you have now taken in hand to pick one that you will find much harder and of more difficult digestion."—Perhaps this may have given rise to the common saying, when one has undertaken any thing arduous or difficult, that "He has got a bone to pick."

The Sicilians, like most other nations in Europe, carefully avoid marrying in the month of May, and look upon such marriages as extremely inauspicious. This piece of superstition is as old, perhaps older, than the time of the Romans, by whose authors it is frequently mentioned, and by whom it has been transmitted to almost every nation in Europe. It is somewhat unaccountable, that so ridiculous an idea, which can have no foundation in nature, should have

stood its ground for so many ages.—There are indeed other customs still more trivial, that are not less universal :—That of making April fools on the first day of that month ; the ceremony of the cake on Twelfth-night ; and some others that will occur to you, of which, no more than this, I have ever been able to learn the origin.

The marriages of the Sicilian nobility are celebrated with great magnificence ; and the number of elegant carriages that are produced on these occasions is altogether astonishing. I wanted to discover when this vast luxury in carriages had taken its rise, and have found an account of the marriage of the daughter of one of their viceroys to the duke of Bivona, in the year 1551 ; it is described by one Elenco, who was a spectator of the ceremony : He says, that the ladies as well as gentlemen were all mounted on fine horses sumptuously caparisoned, and preceded by pages ; that there were only three carriages in the city, which were used by invalids that were not able to ride on horseback ; these he calls *Carrette*, which word now signifies a little cart.

The Sicilian ladies marry very young, and frequently live to see the fifth or sixth generation. You will expect, no doubt, that I should say something of their beauty :—In general they are sprightly and agreeable ; and in most parts of Italy they would be esteemed handsome.—A Neapolitan or a Roman would surely pronounce them so ;—but a Piedmontese would declare them extremely ordinary ;—so indeed would most Englishmen.—Nothing so vague as our ideas of female beauty ; they change in every climate, and the criterion is no where to be found.—

“ Ask where’s the North ;—at York, ’tis on the Tweed,  
 “ In Scotland at th’ Orcades, and there,  
 “ At Nova Zembla, or the Lord knows where”

No



No two nations,—perhaps no two men, have affixed precisely the same characteristics; and every one exalts his idea of it, according to the beauty of the women he is accustomed to see; so that even the same person may sometimes appear beautiful, sometimes ugly, just in proportion as we have seen others that are more or less so.—I remember, after making the tour of Savoy and the Lower Valais, every woman we met in Switzerland appeared an angel. The same thing happens in travelling through some parts of Germany; and you will easily recollect the surprising difference betwixt a beauty at Milan and one at Turin, although these places lie adjacent to each other.—It is a pity that the Juno of Zeuxis has been lost, if it were no more than to have shewn us the notion the ancients had of a perfect beauty.—Indeed, the Venus of Medicis has been considered as a model of perfection;—but it is surely absurd;—for who ever heard of a perfect beauty of five feet high?—the very idea is ridiculous; and whatever figure her goddessship might make amongst the ancient divinities in the Pantheon at Rome, I am afraid she would cut but a sorry one amongst the modern ones in that of London.—In short, I believe we may safely conclude, that beauty is a relative quality, and the *To-kalon* is no longer the same, no more in a physical than in a moral sense, in any two places on the globe.

The ladies here have remarkable fine hair, and they understand how to dress and adorn it to the greatest advantage. It is now only used as an embellishment to their beauty; but in former times, we are told, that, like that of Sampson, it was found to be the strength and protection of their country.—There is a paradox for you, that all the wise men of the East could hardly solve.—Their historians relate (in whose reign I believe is rather dubious) that this city had suffered a long siege from the Saracens, and was greatly reduced by famine; but what distressed them

still more, there were no materials to be found for making bow-strings, and they were on the point of surrendering.—In this dilemma a patriotic dame stepped forth, and proposed to the women, that the whole of them should cut off their hair and twist it into bow-strings: This was immediately complied with. The heroism of the women, you know, must ever excite that of the men.—The besieged, animated by this gallant sacrifice of the fair, renewed their defence with such vigour that the assailants were beat off; and a reinforcement soon arriving, the city was saved.—The ladies still value themselves on this story, which, you may believe, has been celebrated by many of their bards.—“The hair of our ladies (says one of their quaint poets) is still employed in the same office; but now it discharges no other shafts but those of Cupid, and the only cords it forms are the cords of love.”

The Sicilians are much fonder of study than their neighbours on the continent, and their education is much more attended to. We were a good deal surprised to find, that instead of that frivolity and nothingness, which so often constitute the conversation of the Italian nobility, here their delight was to talk on subjects of literature, of history, of politics, but chiefly of poetry; for the other branches of knowledge and science are only general; this is the only one that may be said to be universal. Every person, in some period of his life, is sure to be inspired; and a lover is never believed so long as he can speak of his passion in prose, and, contrary to our way of reasoning, is only reckoned true in proportion as he is poetical. Thus inspiration, you see, has here become the test of truth.

We were astonished, on our first arrival at Palermo, to hear ourselves addressed in English by some of the young nobility; but still more so, to find them intimately acquainted with many of our celebrated

poets

poets and philosophers.—Milton, Shakespear, Dryden, Pope, Bacon, Bolingbroke, we found in several libraries, not in the translation, but generally in the best editions of the original.

Our language, indeed, has become so much in vogue, that it is now looked upon almost as an essential part of a polite education: The viceroy, the Marquis Fogliano, a man of great merit and humanity, has made some of our authors his favourite study, and greatly encourages the progress it is making in this kingdom. Many of the nobility speak it a little, and some of them even with ease and fluency, although they have never been out of their island. The Marquis Natali, the Counts Statela and Buschemi, the Duke of St. Micheli, &c. &c. in whose company we have enjoyed a great deal of pleasure, and whose knowledge and erudition is the least part of their praise. Adieu.

Yours, &c.

#### L E T T E R XXXIV.

Palermo, July 28th.

**I** HAD almost forgot to say any thing of the opera.—It would have been very ungrateful, for we have been much delighted with it. The first and second man are both admirable singers, and I make no doubt you will have them in London in a few years; neither of them are as yet known, and, I dare say, they might be engaged for a very moderate price; but in Italy they will soon be taught to estimate their value.—The name of the first is Pachercotti; he is very young, and an entire stranger in the musical world; yet I am persuaded, that after he has been heard on the different theatres in Italy, he will be esteemed one of their capital performers. His excellence



cellence is the pathetic, at present too much neglected on most theatres; and indeed, I think, he gives more expression to his *cantabile* airs, and makes his hearers feel more, because he feels more himself, than any that I have seen in Italy. He indeed addresses himself at once to the heart, while most of the modern performers sing only to the fancy.

The first woman is Gabrieli, who is certainly the greatest singer in the world; and those that sing on the same theatre with her must be capital, otherwise they never can be attended to. This indeed has been the fate of all the other performers here, except Pacherotti, and he too gave himself up for lost on hearing her first performance.—It happened to be an air of execution, exactly adapted to her voice, which she exerted in so astonishing a manner, that poor Pacherotti burst out a crying, and ran in behind the scenes, lamenting that he had been prevailed on to appear on the same stage with so wonderful a singer, where his small talents must not only be totally lost, but where he must ever be accused of a presumption, which he hoped was foreign to his character.

It was with some difficulty they could prevail on him to appear again; but from an applause well merited, both from his talents and his modesty, he soon began to pluck up a little courage, and in the singing of a tender air, addressed to Gabrieli in the character of a lover, even she herself, as well as the audience, is said to have been moved.

Indeed, in these very pathetic pieces, I am surprised that the power of the music does not sometimes altogether overcome the delusion of character; for when you are master of the language, and allow the united power of the poetry, the action, and the music, to have its full force on the mind, the effect is wonderfully great.—However, I have never heard that this happened completely but once, and it was no less a singer than the great Farinelli that produced it.

it.—He appeared in the character of a young captive hero, and in a very tender air was soliciting mercy for his mistress and himself, of a stern and cruel tyrant who had made them his prisoners. The person that acted the tyrant was so overcome by the melting strains of Farinelli, that instead of refusing his request, as he ought to have done, he entirely forgot his character, burst into tears, and caught him in his arms.

The performance of Gabrieli is so generally known and admired, that it is almost needless to say any thing to you on that subject. Her wonderful execution and volubility of voice have long been the admiration of Italy, and has even obliged them to invent a new term to express it; and would she exert herself as much to please as to astonish, she might almost perform the wonders that have been ascribed to Orpheus and Timotheus; but it happens, luckily perhaps for the repose of mankind, that her caprice is, if possible, even greater than her talents, and has made her still more contemptible than these have made her celebrated. By this means, her character has often proved a sufficient antidote both to the charms of her voice and those of her person, which are indeed almost equally powerful; but if these had been united to the qualities of a modest and an amiable mind, she must have made dreadful havoc in the world. However, with all her faults, she is certainly the most dangerous siren of modern times, and has made more conquests, I suppose, than any one woman breathing.

It is but justice to add, that, contrary to the generality of her profession, she is by no means selfish or mercenary; but, on the contrary, has given many singular proofs of generosity and disinterestedness. She is very rich, from the bounty, as is supposed, of the last emperor, who was fond of having her at Vienna; but she was at last banished that city, as

she has likewise been most of those in Italy, from the broils and squabbles that her intriguing spirit, perhaps still more than her beauty had excited.

There is a variety of anecdotes concerning her, that would not make an unentertaining volume; and, I am told, either are, or will soon be published.

Although she is considerably upwards of thirty, on the stage she scarcely appears to be eighteen;—and this art of appearing young, is none of the most contemptible that she possesses. When she is in good humour, and really chooses to exert herself, there is nothing in music, that I have ever heard, at all to be compared to her performance; for she sings to the heart as well as the fancy, when she pleases, and she then commands every passion with unbounded sway. But she is seldom capable of exercising these wonderful powers; and her caprice and her talents exerting themselves by turns, have given her, all her life, the singular fate of becoming alternately an object of admiration and of contempt.

Her powers in acting and reciting, are scarcely inferior to those of her singing; sometimes a few words in the recitative, with a simple accompaniment only, produced an effect, that I have never been sensible of from any other performer, and inclines me to believe what Rousseau advances on this branch of music, which with us is so much despised. She owes much of her merit to the instructions she received from Metastasio, particularly in acting and reciting; and he has ever said, that she does more justice to his operas than any other actresses that ever attempted them.

Her caprice is so fixed and so stubborn, that neither interest, nor flattery, nor threats, nor punishments, have the least power over it; and it appears, that treating her with respect or contempt, have an equal tendency to increase it.



It is seldom that she condescends to exert these wonderful talents, but most particularly if she imagines that such an exertion is expected; and instead of singing her airs as other actresses do, for the most part she only hums them over, *a mezza voce*. And no art whatever is capable of making her sing when she does not choose it.

The most successful expedient has ever been found, to prevail on her favourite lover, for she always has one, to place himself in the centre of the pit, or the front box; and if they are on good terms, which is seldom the case, she will address all her tender airs to him, and exert herself to the utmost.—Her present innamorato promised to give us this specimen of his power over her; he took his place accordingly;—but Gabrieli, probably suspecting the connivance, would take no notice of him; so that even this expedient does not always succeed.

The viceroy, who is fond of music, has tried every method with her to no purpose.—Some time ago he gave a great dinner to the principal nobility of Palermo, and sent an invitation to Gabrieli to be of the party. Every other person arrived precisely at the hour of invitation. The viceroy ordered dinner to be kept back for some time, and sent to let her know that the company waited for her. The messenger found her reading in bed;—she said she was sorry for having made the company wait, and begged he would make her apology, but that really she had entirely forgot her engagement.

The viceroy would have forgiven this piece of insolence; but when the company came to the opera, Gabrieli repeated her part with the most perfect negligence and indifference, and sung all her airs in what they call *sotte voce*, that is, so low that she can scarcely be heard. The viceroy was offended, but as he is a good tempered man, he was loth to make use of authority; but at last, by a perseverance in this insolent

lent stubbornness, she obliged him to threaten her with punishment, in case she any longer refused to sing.

On this she grew more obstinate than ever, declaring, that force and authority should never succeed with her; that he might make her cry, but that he never could make her sing. The viceroy then sent her to prison, where she remained twelve days, during which time she gave magnificent entertainments every day, paid the debts of all the poor prisoners, and distributed large sums in charity. The viceroy was obliged to give up struggling with her, and she was at last set at liberty, amidst the acclamations of the poor.—Luckily for us, she is at present in very good humour, and sometimes exerts herself to the utmost of her power.

She says, she has several times been on terms with the managers of our opera, but she thinks she shall never be able to pluck up resolution enough to go to England. What do you think is her reason?—It is by no means a bad one. She says, she cannot command her caprice, but, for the most part, that it commands her; and that there she could have no opportunity of indulging it: For, says she, were I to take it into my head not to sing, I am told, the people there would certainly mob me, and perhaps break my bones;—now I like to sleep in a sound skin, although it should even be in a prison.—She alleges too, that it is not always caprice that prevents her from singing, but that it often depends upon physical causes; and this indeed I can readily believe:—for that wonderful flexibility of voice, that runs with such rapidity and neatness through the most minute divisions, and produces almost instantaneously so great a variety of modulation, must surely depend on the very nicest tone of the fibres; and if these are in the smallest degree relaxed, or their elasticity diminished, how is it possible that their contractions and expansions can so readily obey the will as to produce these effects?

effects?—The opening of the glottis which forms the voice is extremely small, and in every variety of tone its diameter must suffer a sensible change; for the same diameter must ever produce the same tone.—So wonderfully minute are its contractions and dilatations, that Dr. Keil, I think, computes, that in some voices its opening, not more than the tenth of an inch, is divided into upwards of 1200 parts, the different sound of every one of which is perceptible to an exact ear.—Now, what a nice tension of fibres must this require!—I should imagine, every the most minute change in the air must cause a sensible difference, and that in our foggy climate the fibres would be in danger of losing this wonderful sensibility;—or at least that they would very often be put out of tune.—It is not the same case with an ordinary voice, where the variety of divisions run through, and the volubility with which they are executed, bear no proportion to those of a Gabrielli.

One of the ballets of our opera is a representation of Vauxhall gardens, and this is the third time I have seen Vauxhall brought upon the Italian theatre; at Turin, at Naples, and here. The gardens are tolerably well represented, and the idea must have been given by some person that had been on the spot.—A variety of very good English figures are brought in;—some with large frizzled wigs, sticking half a yard out behind their necks; some with little cut scratches. Some come in cracking their whips, with buck-skin breeches and jockey caps.—Some are armed with a great oaken stick, their hair tied up in an enormous club, and stocks that swell their necks to double its natural size. But what affords the principal part of the entertainment is three quakers, who are duped by three ladies of the town, in concert with three jack tars, their lovers.—These characters, as you may believe, are much exaggerated, though, upon the whole, they are supported with humour, and have afforded



us a good deal of laughing ; however, we were hurt to see the respectable character of quakers turned into such ridicule ; and as the people here were altogether unacquainted with it, we have been at some pains to explain to them the simplicity and purity of their manners, and the incorruptible integrity of their principles.

Although the Sicilians in general are a good sort of people, and seem to be endowed with a large share of philanthropy and urbanity, yet it must be owned, that they have no great affection for their neighbours on the continent ; and, indeed, the dislike is altogether reciprocal.—It is somewhat singular, I am afraid not much for the honour of human nature, that thro' all Europe the two neighbouring nations have a perpetual jarring with each other.—I could heartily have wished that we had been an exception from this rule ; but am sorry to see, from some of our news papers, which are sent to the nobility of this city, that at present we are rather the most distinguished for it ; at least our animosities, if there really are any, make by much the greatest noise of all.—We have often been asked by foreigners, what was the ground of the mighty quarrel, that such torrents of the most illiberal abuse have been poured out by a people so celebrated for liberality of sentiment ; and it is with difficulty we can persuade them, that although from the papers, this sometimes appears to be the voice of the nation, yet, in fact, it is only confined to a set of the most worthless incendiaries ; like him who set the house in a flame, on purpose to pilfer during the conflagration.—But the abuse that is levelled at the king, astonishes them much more than all the rest ; and you cannot conceive their amazement and indignation when we assured them, that notwithstanding all this, he was the most virtuous and benevolent prince on earth.—Then, exclaimed a Sicilian nobleman, you must certainly be the most damnable people

ple on the globe.—I was a good deal struck with the suddenness of the accusation; and it was not without many explanations of the liberty of our constitution, and particularly that of the press, that I could prevail with him to retract his sentiments, and think more favourably of us.—Still he insisted, that so egregious an abuse of this liberty was only a farther proof of his position, and that there must be something essentially wrong in a nation, that could allow of such abuse levelled at the most sacred of all characters, the highest virtue united to the highest station; a thing so very rarely to be met with. We assured him, that what he heard was only the voice of the most abandoned and profligate wretches in the nation, who, taking advantage of the great freedom of the press, had often made these news-papers the vehicles of the most detestable sedition. That both the king and the queen were beloved by all their subjects,—at least by all those of worth;—that they never were spoken of but as the most perfect model of conjugal union and happiness, as well as of every social endowment; and that they could have no enemies but the enemies of virtue.

However, after all, we could but patch up a peace with him. He could not comprehend (he said) how the voice of a few incendiaries should be louder than the general voice of the nation.—We told him, that people who were pleased commonly held their tongue; and that sedition and libel ever made a greater noise than panegyric; just as the fire-bell is rung louder, and is more listened to, than the bell for rejoicing.

Adieu. Our pilot says, the wind is not fair, so that possibly we may still stay a day or two longer.

Ever yours.

LET-

Palermo, July 29th.

WERE I to enter upon the natural history of this island, it would lead me into a vast field of speculation, for which I have neither time nor abilities: However, a variety of objects struck us as we travelled along, that it may not be amiss to give you some little account of.—There is a vast variety of mineral waters, almost through the whole of Sicily; many of these are boiling hot, others, still more singular, are of a degree of cold superior to that of ice, and yet never freeze.

In several places they have springs of water that throw up a kind of oil on their surface, which is of great use to the peasants, who burn it in their lamps, and use it to many purposes. But there is still a more remarkable one near Nicosia, which is callad *il fonte Canalotto*; it is always covered with a thick scum of a kind of pitch, which amongst the country people is esteemed a sovereign remedy in rheumatic, and many other complaints.

The water of a small lake neat Naso is much celebrated for dyeing black every thing that is put into it; and this it is said to perform without the mixture of any other ingredient, altho' the water itself is remarkably pure and transparent.

They have a variety of sulphureous baths, like those near Naples, where the patient is thrown into a profuse sweat, only from the heat of the vapour. The most celebrated are those of Sciaccia, and on the mountain of St. Cologero, not in the neighbourhood of Ætna, as I expected, but at a very great distance from that mountain. But indeed I am much inclined to believe, that not only mount Ætna, but the greatest part of Sicily, and almost the whole of the circumjacent islands, have been originally formed  
by



by subterraneous fire; but I shall have an opportunity of speaking more largely on this subject, when I give you an account of the country round Naples.

I have observed lava, pumice, and tufa in many parts of Sicily, at a very great distance from Ætna; and there are a vast variety both of mountains and valleys that still emit a hot vapour, and produce springs of boiling water.

About a mile and a half to the west of this city, at a small beach where we often go a swimming, there are many springs of warm water, that rise even within the sea at the depth of five or six feet. We were greatly astonished to find ourselves, almost instantaneously both in the hot and cold bath; for at one stroke we commonly passed thro' the hot water, which only extends for a few feet around the spring. It gave us a momentary glow, and produced a very odd uncouth sensation, by no means an agreeable one. I mentioned this singularity to several gentlemen here, who tell me they have often observed the same thing.

Not a great way from this there is a celebrated fountain, called *il Mar Dolce*, where there are some remains of an antient naumachia; and in the mountain above it they shew you a cavern, where a gigantic skeleton is said to have been found; however, it fell all to dust when they attempted to remove it.—Fazello says, that its teeth were the only part that resisted the impression of the air; that he procured two of them, and that they weighed near two ounces.—There are many such stories to be met with in the Sicilian legends, as it seems to be almost an universal belief, that this island was once inhabited by giants; but although we have made diligent inquiry, we have never yet been able to procure a sight of these gigantic bones, which are said to be still preserved in many parts

parts of the island. Had there been any foundation for this, I think it is probable, they must have found their way into some of the museums; but this is not the case, nor indeed have we met with any person of sense and credibility that could say they had seen any of them.—We had been assured at Naples, that an entire skeleton, upwards of ten feet high, was preserved in the museum of Palermo; but there is no such thing there, nor I believe any where else in the island.—This museum is well furnished both with antiques and articles of natural history, but is not superior to what we have seen in many other places.

The number of souls in Palermo are computed at about 150,000; those of the whole island, by the last numeration, amounted to 1,123,163, of which number there are about 50,000 that belong to the different monasteries and religious orders; the number of houses are computed at 268,120, which makes betwixt five and six to a house.

The great standing commodity of Sicily, which has ever constituted the riches of the island, was their crops of wheat; but they cultivate many other branches of commerce, though none that could bear any proportion to this, were it under a free government, and exportation allowed. Their method of preserving their grain will appear somewhat singular to our farmers; instead of exposing it, as we do, to the open air, they are at the greatest pains to exclude it entirely from it.—In many places where the soil is dry, particularly near Agrigentum, they have dug large pits or caverns in the rock; these open by a small hole at top, and swell to a great width below; here they pour down their grain, after it has been made exceedingly dry, and ramming it very hard they cover up the hole, to protect it from rain; and they assure us, it will preserve in this manner for many years.

The

The Soda is a plant that is much cultivated, and turns out to a considerable account. This is the vegetable, that by the action of fire, is afterwards converted into mirrors and crystals. Great quantities of it are sent every year to supply the glass-houses at Venice.—They have likewise a considerable trade in liquorice, rice, figs, raisins, and currants, the best of which grow amongst the extinguished volcanos of the Lipari islands. Their honey is, I think, the highest flavoured I have ever seen; in some parts of the island even superior to that of Minorca: this is owing, no doubt, to the great quantities of strong aromatic plants, with which this beautiful country is every where overspread. This honey is gathered three months in the year; July, August, and October. It is found by the peasants in the hollows of trees and rocks; and is esteemed of a superior quality to that produced under the tyranny of man.—The country of the Lesser Hybla is still, as formerly, the most celebrated part of the island for honey. The Count Statela made us a present of some of it, gathered on his brother the Prince of Spaccaformo's estate, which lies near the ruins of that city.

Sugar is now no article of the Sicilian commerce, though a small quantity of it is still manufactured for home consumption; but the plantations of the sugarcane, I am told, thrive very much in several parts of the island.

The juice of liquorice is prepared both here and in Calabria, and is sent to the northern countries of Europe, where it is much used for colds.—The juice is squeezed out of the roots; after which it is boiled to a consistency, and formed into cakes, which are packed up with bay-leaves in the same order that we receive them.

In some of the northern parts of the island, I am told, they find the shell-fish that produces a kind of flax, of which gloves and stockings are made; but



these too are found in much greater quantities in Calabria.

Their plantations of oranges, lemons and bergamots, almonds, &c. produce no inconsiderable branch of commerce. The pistachio-nut too is much cultivated in many parts of the island, and with great success. These trees, like many others, are male and female, the male is called *Scornobecco*, and is always barren; but unless a quantity of these are mixed in every plantation, the pistachio-tree never bears a nut.—But of all the variety that is cultivated in Sicily, the manna-tree is esteemed the most profitable; it resembles the ash, and is I believe of that species. About the beginning of August, during the season of the greatest heat, they make an incision in the bark near to the root of the tree; a thick whitish liquor is immediately discharged from the wound, which soon hardens in the sun; when it is carefully taken off and gathered into boxes. They renew these incisions every day during the season, observing, however, only to wound one side of the tree; the other side they reserve for the summer following.

The cantharides-fly is a Sicilian commodity: it is found on several trees of *Ætna*, whose juice is supposed to have a corrosive or absterfivè quality, particularly the pine and fig-tree; and I am told the cantharides of Mount *Ætna* are reckoned preferable to those of Spain.

The marbles of Sicily would afford a great source of opulence, were there any encouragement to work the quarries: of these they have an infinite variety, and of the finest sorts. I have seen some of them very little, if at all inferior to the famous giall, and verd antique, that is now so precious. The beautiful yellow columns you must probably have observed in the royal chapel of Casserto are of the first kind. They have likewise some that very much resemble lapis lazuli and porphyry.

At Centorbi they find a kind of soft stone that dissolves in water, and is used in washing instead of soap, from which property it is called *Pietra Saponaro*.—They likewise find here, as well as in Calabria, the celebrated stone, which, upon being watered and exposed to a pretty violent degree of heat, produces a plentiful crop of mushrooms.—But it would be endless to give you an account of all the various commodities and curious productions of this Island; *Ætna* alone affords a greater number than many of the most extensive kingdoms, and is no less an epitome of the whole earth in its soil and climate, than in the variety of its productions.—Besides the corn, the wine, the oil, the silk, the spice, and delicious fruits of its lower region;—the beautiful forests, the flocks, the game, the tar, the cork, the honey, of its second;—the snow and ice of its third, it affords from its caverns a variety of mineral and other productions; cinnabar, mercury, sulphur, allum, nitre, and vitriol; so that this wonderful mountain at the same time produces every necessary, and every luxury of life.

Its first region covers their tables with all the delicacies that the earth produces;—its second supplies them with game, cheese, butter, honey; and not only furnishes wood of every kind for building their ships and houses, but likewise an inexhaustible store of the most excellent fuel; and as the third region, with its snow and ice, keeps them fresh and cool during the heat of summer, so this contributes equally to keep them warm and comfortable during the cold of winter.

Thus, you see, the variety of climates is not confined to *Ætna* itself; but, in obedience to the voice of man, descends from the mountain; and, mingling the violence of their extremes, diffuses the most benign influences all over the island, tempering each other to moderation, and softening the rigours of every season.

We

We are not then to be surprized at the obstinate attachment of the people to this mountain, and that all his terrors have not been able to drive them away from him ; for although he sometimes chastizes, yet, like an indulgent parent, he mixes such blessings along with his chastizements, that their affections can never be estranged ; for at the same time that he threatens with a rod of iron, he pours down upon them all the blessings of the age of gold.

Adieu.—We are now going to pay our respects to the viceroy, and make all our farewell visits. —This ceremony never fails to throw a damp on my spirits ; but I have seldom found it so strong as at present, there being no probability that we shall ever see again a number of worthy people we are just now going to take leave of ; or that we shall ever have it in our power to make any return for the many civilities we have received from them.

Farewel. The wind we are told is fair, and I shall probably be the bearer of this to the continent, from whence you may soon expect to hear from,

Ever yours, &c.

## LETTER XXXVI.

Naples, August 1st.

**A**FTER two days delightful sailing, we have again arrived in this city ; where, to our infinite joy, we have found all the worthy friends we had left behind us. This indeed was necessary, to wipe out the impressions which the leaving of Sicily had occasioned. We shall still remain here, at least for three months, till the season of the *Mal Aria* is entirely over. You know the danger of travelling through the Campania during that season ; which although it is looked upon by many of our learned doctors as a vulgar error, yet we certainly shall not submit ourselves to the experiment.

We



We propose to pass the winter at Rome, where we shall probably find occupation enough for four or five months.—From thence by Loretto, Bologna, &c. to Venice; the old beaten track.—We shall then leave the parched fields of Italy, for the delightful cool mountains of Switzerland; where liberty and simplicity, long since banished from polished nations, still flourish in their original purity; where the temperature and moderation of the climate, and that of the inhabitants, are mutually emblematical of each other.

—For whilst other nations are scorched by the heat of the sun, and still the more scorching heats of tyranny and superstition;—here the genial breezes for ever fan the air, and heighten that alacrity and joy which liberty and innocence alone can inspire;—here the genial flow of the soul has never yet been check'd by the idle and useless refinements of art; but opens and expands itself to all the calls of affection and benevolence.—But I must stop.—You know my old attachment to that primitive country.—It never fails to run away with me. We propose then, to make this the scene of our summer pleasures; and by that time, I can foresee, we shall be heartily tired of art, and shall begin again to languish after nature.—It is she alone that can give any real or lasting pleasure, and in all our pursuits of happiness, if she is not our guide, we never can attain our end.

Adieu, my dear friend.—You have been our faithful companion during this tour, and have not contributed a little to its pleasure. If it has afforded equal entertainment to you, we shall beg of you still to accompany us through the rest of our travels.—A man must have a miserable imagination, indeed, that can be in solitude, whilst he has such friends to converse with;—the consideration of it soon removes the mountains and seas that separate us, and produces these sympathetic feelings, which are the only equivalent for the real absence of a friend; for I never sit down to write  
but

but I see you placed on the opposite side of the table, and suppose that we are just talking over the transactions of the day ;—and without your presence to animate me, how is it possible that I could have had patience to write these enormous epistles ?—Adieu. We are soon going to make some excursions through the kingdom of Naples ; and if they produce any thing worthy of your observation, we must beg that you will still submit to be one of the party.

I ever am,

Most sincerely and affectionately yours,

PAT. BRYDONE.

F I N I S.



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